



STRATEGIC PLANNING & FEASIBILITY STUDY

FINAL REPORT

March 2012

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***Significant Findings** are statements of fact established or learned through the 2011 summer and fall work of the Strategic Planning Process. These findings form the underpinnings and context of the final Recommendations. Findings come from the dialogue at the eight Public Meetings that were held, or come from analysis or research presented by the speakers at those meetings, as well as surveying work done by the committee.*

***Recommendations** are actionable statements resulting from the analysis of the materials and dialogue presented. It is hoped that the Board of Management and members of the public will accept these recommendations wholly or in large part.*

This report can only give some of the information gleaned surrounding the Strategic Planning and Feasibility Study. We urge the reader to review the originating documents on the WDRA website: <http://www.westmeathtoday.ca/strategic-planning-feasibility-study-2011-12/>.

Process Summary

In early 2011, the Westmeath & District Recreation Association (WDRA) Board of Management passed motions to conduct a Strategic Planning Process, to be completed by the April 2012 Annual General Meeting.

OBJECTIVE:

To address a general community-wide anxiety about the aging recreation centre building, and investigate what the future might bring to recreational programming in the communities of Westmeath, La Passe and Perretton, in the northern area of the Township of Whitewater Region, Ontario.

STRATEGY:

- Strategic assessment of our recreational services, and
- Feasibility study of building & physical assets
- Present to the community clear recommendations of actions required.

PROCESS: All summaries and references of this undertaking are recorded and available online at <http://www.westmeathtoday.ca/strategic-planning-feasibility-study-2011-12>.

- a) Delivered a series of 8 public meetings/workshops (July-October, 2011), based on;
 - Open-door policy to ensure everyone has opportunity to express opinions.
 - Being a source of fact-based information on a variety of topics.
 - All discussions, presentations and recommendations available online for all to see.

- b) Commissioned a volunteer community Ad Hoc Committee,
 - Community usage & attitude Resident Survey re programming completed.
 - Building Condition Assessment providing a multi-year capital proposal completed.

- c) Special WDRA Volunteer Hours Survey completed.

Significant Findings

1. Participation:

- a. Estimated 5 % of residents (100/2,000) participated in the strategic process (attended meetings, answered surveys, expressed opinions).
- b. Estimated 20% +/- of residents (400/2,000) volunteer at one time or another to support WDRA activities (personal time, monetary or food or other donations).

2. Demographics: Resident age (approx.) in Ward 2; the WDRA catchment area:

- | | | | | |
|----|---------|-------|-----|---------------|
| a. | 1 – 20 | years | 14% | 280 persons |
| b. | 21- 60 | years | 59% | 1,180 persons |
| c. | 61 plus | years | 27% | 540 persons |

3. Role & Usage: The Westmeath Recreation Centre continues to act as a community, social, and sports centre. For the youth, its heart is hockey. And for older users, hockey is its history.

The Recreation Centre is the only large public gathering place in the immediate area and is heavily used.

- a. The Westmeath Recreation Centre is clearly seen by residents as “the heart of the community.” “The power of human contact” is experienced with public interest presentations, social events, group physical or sports activities held at the Centre.

Community groups and residents use the Centre for Remembrance Day, Riverview Social Club weekly meetings, Wellness Clinics, exercise classes, public and separate schools’ concerts and graduations, church groups fundraisers and local 4-H Club meetings.

The facility hosts a full hockey game and tournament schedule, recreational skating, weddings, funerals, rummage sales, community breakfasts and WDRA sponsored events year round. An early summer minor ball schedule of games is played on the Centre’s Ball Field. The annual Winter Carnival and the Canada Day events draw large crowds and are used as major fundraisers.

- b. Current programming and special events are seen as very important by residents across all ages.

4. **Mandate:** Overall the mandate of the WDRA is understood by residents and municipal officials to mean:
 - a. Operate and manage the Westmeath Recreation Centre, through maintenance, programming and fundraising.
 - b. Ensure legal, legislative and safety standards are met. (There are 50 acts of legislation that affect the running of arenas in Ontario.)
 - c. Provide auditable financial records .

5. **Leadership** is critical. Greater efforts must be used to support and replenish volunteer leadership. *“Communities get better when their leaders do.”* The Board of Management should be strengthening succession planning efforts by cultivating leadership among the youth and adults of the community. An excellent source of leadership volunteerism rests with those 60 yrs + (Boomers), if they are approached to share the expertise they have gained over many years in the workforce.

6. **Volunteers:** The Westmeath Recreation Centre and its programs are managed totally by volunteers. This is the result of, and at the same time, encourages the feeling of ownership, all-inclusivity, working together for common goals, and sense of giving back, thus building cohesion between citizens (*Social Capital*). At present there is no structured *“Volunteer Recognition/Appreciation Program”* except the annual selection of the Volunteer of the Year; nor are there any structured volunteer training programs.

7. **Communication** between the WDRA leadership and the community has been achieved by a new WDRA website www.westmeathtoday.ca built in 2011 and a monthly WDRA Newsletter that is mailed to all residents. The newsletter is very well read. Posters and email circulation of event information is also used. Residents can contact the Board members through the website, the Board Office phone line or in person. The monthly WDRA Board of Management meetings are open to the public but residents rarely attend.

8. **Municipal Governance:** Residents want more future involvement by the municipal government in leadership and funding. At present the Township of Whitewater Township does not have any strategic planning in place for the future delivery of recreation services and does not have a Parks and Recreation Department.
As a small rural municipality, Whitewater Region relies heavily on residential property taxes, due to large sections of lower-taxed forest or farm lands and a dearth of commercial and industrial taxpayers. The Township of Whitewater Region will face increasingly dire circumstances in the maintenance and construction of numerous

infrastructure projects; including but not limited to the providing of modern arena or other recreational facilities.

Surveyed respondents were willing to face increased taxation if the increase was slated for use only for local recreational needs.

9. **Recreation Associations Co-operation** between the three area indoor arenas already happens on some maintenance projects with the sharing of the workforce to tackle large projects and the sharing of expertise and experience. Board of Management activity at the neighbouring Recreation Associations varies and no partnering between Boards has taken place. Paid full-time programming and facilities management is used at the Cobden and Beachburg Arenas. Westmeath Arena uses only a paid part-time maintenance manager and all programming and facilities management is done by volunteers. Neighbouring Associations were invited to participate in the dialogue in this process's public meetings but the level of acceptance was very low and in some cases not at all.

10. **Financials:**

- a. The volunteer workforce and leadership have shown a proven ability to meet all the budgetary demands and finished the past two years with a positive cash flow balance. The Westmeath Recreation Centre business has made an average net income (income after expenses) of some \$22,835 in 2010 and some \$15,021 in 2011; excluding the Accessibility Grant and the new chiller purchased from reserves and cash flow.
- b. The Arena side of the operation cannot carry itself on ice rentals alone. Other sources of income such as a municipal grant, billboard ads, Bingo Country and fundraisers are required to cover fixed, variable and larger capital expenses. However, this is not unusual. The same situation exists in most aging Ontario arenas.
Hockey participation at all ages is dropping across the province; and in recent years ice usage has been less than 50% capacity at the Westmeath Arena. The aging arena may not be aesthetically attractive to users even though our ice rental fees are some of the lowest in Eastern Ontario.
- c. The Hall is a broad-based community resource: rentals, bar and catering income from events (either hockey related, WDRA sponsored or outside

groups), can cover the Hall's operation, noting that the fixed operating costs of the Hall are lower than the arena.

- d. **Capital Improvements:** The following chart contains Capital Improvements as earmarked by the JP2G *Building Condition Assessment* and reviewed by the Ad Hoc Physical Plant Sub-Committee to include all components that will need future attention:

YEAR	PROJECTS	ESTIMATED COST
2012-13	Site Drainage Re-grading	Whitewater Township
	Side Ramp and Stairs Entrance	\$ 40,000
	Replace Evaporator Condenser	\$ 30,000
	Roof Structure (Hall)	\$ 20,000
	Arena Dehumidifier	\$ 15,000
	Plumbing	\$ 2,000
	Foundation Walls	\$ 1,000
	Soffit, Fascia & Gable Vents	\$ 1,000
	Arena Gas Detector	<u>\$ 1,000</u>
	Sub-total	\$110,000
2014-15	Replace Motor Control Centre Panel	\$ 40,000
	Ice Plant Structure	<u>\$ 1,000</u>
	Sub-total	\$ 41,000
2016	Roof Structure (Arena)	\$ 40,000
2017 -27	Arena Slab	\$500,000
	Water Furnace Heat Pumps (Hall)	\$100,000
	New or Used Ice Resurfacer (Zamboni)	\$ 80,000
	Insulating Arena	\$ 75,000
	Kitchen Exhaust Fire Suppression Hood	\$ 60,000
	Change Rooms Ventilation (HRV)	\$ 50,000
	Arena Lighting Replacement	\$ 27,000
	Canteen Exhaust Hood	\$ 25,000
	Heat Reclaim in Arena	\$ 25,000
	Electrical System	\$ 20,000
	Fire Alarm System	\$ 15,000
	Arena Spectator Heating System	\$ 7,500
	Window Replacement	\$ 7,000
	Heat Recovery Units in Hall	\$ 4,000
	Wells	<u>\$ 2,500</u>
Sub-total	\$998,000	
	TOTAL	\$1,189,000

Overall, the consultant firm JP2G has found the building to be in “good” structural condition but noted various issues that needed to be addressed. The JP2G assessment

did not include any mechanicals or components of the ice plant. All those items are included in this chart.

11. **Funding:** Various outside funding sources are available; however eligibility and the successful attaining of grant or loan monies are never assured.

Two primary funding sources that can be used are:

a. **Eastern Ontario Development Program (EODP):** *“Access to Capital”* Loans available at 0% interest rate (<\$25K Capital Loan), or *“Social Enterprise”* Loans at less than prime interest rate (<\$150K Improvement Loan).

b. **Ontario Trillium Foundation:**

i. Funds available for a) Capital, b) Project, or c) Operating costs - for community-based initiatives in the not-for-profit sector.

ii. A Capital Grant may be used for renovations or equipment; not for new construction. Maximum grant is \$150,000, with a maximum draw of \$75,000/yr. and maximum drawdown period of 5 yrs.

Application deadlines: March 1, July 1, November 1 - with 4 month approval/decline turnaround time.

Effective applications should demonstrate a lasting impact to many, detail partnerships and collaborations, be accessible to ALL and be supportable and thorough.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The current **Mission Statement** should be maintained and a new Values or Ethics Statement be established in future. The current Mission Statement reads:
“We are a non-profit community governed organization, whose purpose is to support the people of our community in meeting their recreational, athletic and social needs; to achieve the best possible community spirit and wellbeing.”

2. **Financial Plan:**
 - a. The Board of Management or its agents should process the pertinent applications for funding and planning documentation as quickly as possible to undertake the selected Capital Improvements.
 - b. Based on recent past results and subsequent repayment capacity, capital loans may be considered by the Board.
 - c. The WDRA Board of Management should endeavour to improve sound business practices; such as improving ice booking management and the timely collection of all rental receivables, earmarking a capital expense fund per annum and requiring an operating budget per annum.

3. **Business Plan:** The WDRA Board of Management should annually:
 - a. Review prices charged for facility rentals
 - b. Propose strategies to market and grow the business
 - c. Set annual revenue targets
 - d. Assess current operations to see where improvements could be made
 - e. Implement new revenue generating programs.

4. The **Strategic Plan** for the organization should be reviewed annually by the WDRA Board of Management to gauge progress and capacity to execute. A more in-depth review of the Strategic Plan should be done every five years.

5. **Volunteerism:**
 - a. The willing volunteer workforce must be viewed as the WDRA’s most important and valued resource. Successful succession planning and sustainability must be seen as key to future program delivery.
 - b. Recruitment of volunteers should require well defined job descriptions and reviews.
 - c. Recruitment should especially include newcomers to the community and be aimed at integrating and welcoming new residents. Special attention should be

given to the overall acceptance of new ideas and practices so that newcomers and their skills will be made to feel welcomed.

- d. A formal but simple, sustainable *“Volunteer Recognition Program”* needs to be established. The new volunteer recognition or awards program must be open to public input and selection. The current *“Volunteer of the Year”* should be renamed *“Volunteer Hall of Fame”*, and the award program should be widened to spotlight many more valued volunteer workers. Seed money for the Program should be sought.
- e. Volunteers should be trained in safety issues and insurance liability concerns.

6. Communication:

- a. The fostering of community spirit and open dialogue should remain as a main goal of the organization.
- b. The Board of Management should communicate all important business and administrative issues and decisions to the residents so everyone knows that sound business practices are being used in the delivery of the community’s recreational services.
- c. Communications between the WDRA Board and programming leadership and the community should be transparent and comprehensive. Residents should fully understand the place and usefulness of the Recreation Association in their lives.
- d. Residents should be encouraged to approach the WDRA Board and programming leadership with ideas to build a progressive future; inclusive of residents’ full spectrum of concerns, needs and values.

7. WDRA Board of Management Structure:

- a. Programming Co-ordinators (Adult, Child, Special Event): Board to determine if they should be established inside, or outside by means of separate committees or positions reporting to the WDRA Board.
- b. Persons with strong business backgrounds should be encouraged to join the Board in executive positions.
- c. Guidelines for conflict of interest and conflict resolution should be established. Suppliers to the WDRA and employees of the WDRA should be excluded from holding Board positions.

8. Programs:

- a. Programming and Special Events currently enjoyed should be maintained if budgeting allows.
- b. New programming (i.e. soccer), should reflect either a proven need or a creative idea and presented to the WDRA Management Board for its review process. The review process will ensure that all programming, (old and new), is fiscally sound and deliverable. Every attempt should be made to examine new opportunities and encourage resident and/or partnership involvement in programming.

9. Short Term and Longer Term Future Viability:

a. Short Term (1 to 5 years):

Program and administrative leadership needs renewal on a yearly basis to bring in new practices and revitalize the organization. Reinvigoration comes from a constant flow of new ideas and successful team building; otherwise volunteer burn-out is possible and a cause for real concern.

Successful funding of major capital improvements must come from outside funding sources.

Two large capital projects should be given highest priority:

1. **Membrane Coverage of the Roof:** The water penetration into the building from the leakage at the contact points in the seams of the corrugated metal roofing is causing a loss of income to the organization because the arena must be closed for business when the ice surface is compromised. The installation of a roof bituminous membrane to stop the leaks must be immediately addressed. The complete roof over both the arena and hall should be done at the same time. An application for full funding should be made to the Trillium Foundation. Failing that, a loan for the project should be pursued or other funding means investigated.
2. **East Side Ramp and Stair Entrance:** The steel frame for the ramp and stairs is in very poor condition and the approach to the ramp has grade issues. The hydro pole should be removed from the site. The complete structure should be demolished and be rebuilt to code. The plan should attempt to tie the arena and the hall entrances together, incorporate new building materials such as plasticized wood products and be landscaped around the base to become an attractive feature of the building. An application for

full funding should be made to the Trillium Foundation. Failing that, a loan for the project should be pursued or other funding means investigated.

- b. **Longer Term (6 + years):** Demographic shifts, (the graying population), in the catchment area and declining numbers participating in the arena's key program of hockey; coupled with the very sizable cost of rebuilding or refurbishing aging arena components, will result in a financial burden beyond what the community can carry. The long term future viability for the arena segment of the business is therefore expected to be unsustainable.

If the need for hockey or ice-based programming continues to decline; the high capital costs of replacing components of the artificial ice plant would not be required and the high operating costs (\$42,000 for Hydro in 2011), of the ice plant would end.

Changing Usages: A future scenario for the Westmeath Recreation Centre might, for example, have the ice made only by natural cold weather freezing, no competitive hockey, only house league and recreational skating or broomball, with the cement ice pad becoming a badminton or tennis court in the warmer months of the year.

The Centre's Hall would not be affected by the demographic shifts and should continue to be an important community meeting place for the area. However it also has aging components and will require future outside funding for such items as new heat pumps, insulation and thermal windows.

- c. **Management to Continue:** In the meanwhile, and until insufficient number of people volunteer, not enough customers rent space, or major capital expenditures cannot be covered, the WDRA Board should carry on the management of the business, with an eye to always adapting to the new realities.
- d. The **Township of Whitewater Region** has no strategic plan in place for arena-based recreational services beyond its annual grant of \$12,500 per annum to each of the three area arenas.
- The Municipality should start now to strategize how it will provide arena-based recreational services when the existing arenas and recreation associations

become unable to handle the heavy burden of indebtedness required to replace or modernize the aging artificial ice plants and maintain the aging buildings.

- e. **Public and Private Sector Partnerships:** The municipality should adapt to future Game-Changers like the predicted shifting demographics where other types of recreational facilities, (other than ice arenas), are more suitable for the changing needs of the Whitewater residents.

Public sector partnerships, with other jurisdictions, will be necessary for small municipalities where they couldn't proceed alone with large capital-intensive new builds. The private sector might also be approached to join a partnership. Out of the box thinking may be essential in the tightened economy of the future.

Sports & Aquatic Complex: For example, Whitewater Region could partner with an adjacent more populated township like Laurentian Valley to build a modern complex with salt water wave and swimming pools, exercise and meeting rooms in the Greenwood area's Whitewater (Westmeath) Industrial Park. Whitewater Township's development officials could also bring in sporting goods or fitness programmers, retailers or outfitters from the private sector to join the partnership; always with the view to finding more commercial capital to build and sustain the complex.

Available serviced land acreages, like in the Whitewater Industrial Park, would allow sports playing fields, walking paths and outdoor uses as well as the new indoor facilities. Easy Greenwood Road access from the Trans-Canada Hwy. 17, easy connections from the Beachburg Road, plus plenty of room for parking lots would all be available at that site.

REPORTS:

- ✓ Public Meeting Summaries, references and survey results are posted on the WDRA website.
- ✓ Ad Hoc Multi-Yr Capital Plan – External (JP2G) and Internal Plans in same website location.
- ✓ Final Report – presented for WDRA Management Board Review on April 2nd and a public presentation at the WDRA Annual General Meeting, on April 16th, 2012 .
Following those dates this Final Report will also be uploaded to the website.

RELATED PROJECT COSTS:

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| • Clem Pilot Consultants Inc. (Strategic Planner) | \$1,186. |
| • JP2G Consultants (Building Condition Assessment) | \$7,200. |
| • Stationery, sundries (estimate) | \$ 250. |
| • Volunteer Hours | Priceless |

Available Material:

All material generated by this strategic planning process has been made available on the internet at: www.westmeathtoday.ca/strategic-planning-feasibility-study-2011-12.

Anyone wishing a printed copy of any specific material should contact the WDRA at the contact addresses on the front cover of this report or use the “*Contact Us*” page on the website, and a copy will be made available to you.

Thank You

STRATEGIC PLANNING AD HOC COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Programming: Anne Bromley, Pierrette Cottrell, Phil Cottrell, Beth Ethier, Lara Mylly,

Physical Plant: Art Bromley, Peter Crosby, Tommy Dunfield, Bryan Dupuis, Peter Ethier

Finance: Bob Grylls, Cheryl Spotswood

Thanks to the WDRA Board of Management for its support and commitment to the strategic planning process. The idea was to get ahead of the curve on the future recreation requirements of La Passe, Perretton, Westmeath. Hopefully that process has been started.

This strategic planning process was a wholly volunteer effort except for the work of the two consultant firms hired to kick-start the process with one workshop and to complete a Building Condition Assessment for the WDRA. Volunteers don't, as a general rule, undertake such a wide ranging and long term study but every rule has an exception.

The many presenters and others who gave freely of their thoughts and information and hours of time and effort during the public meetings and beyond are gratefully acknowledged. This effort relied on that generosity of ideas, thoughts and spirit to be successful.

Sincere thanks to the members of the public in Westmeath and District who participated in the process with us or who read along online throughout the process.

Also thanks go out to the members of the Township of Whitewater Region council and staff. Your input and moral support was of great value.

Facilitator and Editor: Gayle Stewart

Summary Secretary: Paul Stewart

March 2012