

Strategic Planning and Feasibility Study Final Report

Presentation at the Annual General Meeting, April 16th, 2012

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What is Strategic Planning? This was the first question to be answered at our first public meeting Saturday, July 9th, 2011. Clem Pilot, a well respected strategic planning consultant, was here and leading our first Workshop so he took us through the requirements.

Strategic Planning is:

- Now used by most public/non profit organizations
- Comprehensive, “big picture” process
- Defines a vision for the future (where you want to be)
- Recognizes WDRA’s changing environment
- Proactive and flexible in addressing issues
- Cyclical

Benefits of Strategic Planning:

- Improve WDRA services to residents
- More effective use of resources (people and money)
- Increased organizational efficiency successful process.
- Improved understanding and buy-in
- More likely political and financial support at all levels,
- Rationalize future decisions by WDRA
- Specific, targeted actions

The ABC’s of Strategic Planning:

- A) Where You Are
- B) Where You Want To Be
- C) How You Get There

This framework introduces you to the elements found in good Strategic Planning.

Well before that July workshop took place, a lot of thinking had gone into how best to prepare for the challenges that lay ahead for the WDRA. Vince Gervais and Paul Stewart, members of the 2010-2011 Board of Management, spent a day in March 2011 with Kelly Williams, Manager, Parks and Recreation, for the Town of Petawawa. Petawawa had just finished a Strategic Planning Study and Master Plan done by Clem Pilot Consultants Inc. and the planning benefits were beginning to be felt. Our two representatives returned home convinced that a Strategic Plan needed to be done for the WDRA.

The next month April 2011, the new incoming 2011-12 Board of Management was faced with the task of solving the puzzle of how to deliver a strategic plan.

There was a recognition of the need for planning but how best to do such a costly and broad spectrum process was not clear. And everyone knew that Strategic Plans and Master Plans are always done at the municipal level but not at the individual rec. association level

To have a Recreational Strategic Plan done for a municipality costs into the tens of thousands – from \$30 to 60K depending on the complexity required. That level of funding was not available to us - so the idea of trying a “DIY” Do-it-Yourself Strategic Plan initiative was born. This has been a unique undertaking because strategic planning is not thought to be a DIY project, and many consultants make a good living keeping it that way. That means that all the poorer and the smaller (usually rural) areas don’t get to see the benefits that strategic planning can bring.

By doing it ourselves we would call on outside experts where needed. We would enlist committed members of our community to work as an ad hoc committee on this project and we would ensure that the whole proceeding was as transparent and as public as it could be.

Consultant Clem Pilot gave generously of his strategic planning expertise – we had him come to kick start the process but he warned that it was no easy task, that there would be challenges to the process and that he had never seen it done by as small a community as ours.

We had consensus on the Need for a Strategic Plan but where to start?

Both Kelly Williams and Clem Pilot were very clear that a technical assessment of the building’s condition had to be done early in the process. Although some earlier work in this area had been done, a complete and full assessment with timelines and costs had never been done. That would be needed as the foundation piece or Step One of the feasibility side of the process so it was very important that it begin.

Do A Building Audit (Building Condition Assessment):

- i. A current professional assessment, of infrastructure and operations (electric, plumbing, heating, sewage, etc.) and set out a 5 or 10 Yr Capital Plan with timelines
- ii. By showing “due diligence”, it takes risk away from individuals/board, (3rd party contract). The engineering consultant firm of JP2G was hired having already done previous work with both the Association and the Township of Whitewater Region.
- iii. Forms evidence of credible need in any funding application

Do A Complete Assessment Of All Components of The Refrigeration Plant:

- i. Have AC Mechanical and the facility management team do a complete assessment of the refrigeration plant with special consideration for the Chiller and Condenser, as well as check the nipples on the Header Trench (potential corrosion). Events overtook

the planning process when last Fall the chiller was replaced as well as a section of the badly corroded Header.

- ii. Forms evidence of credible need in any funding application

Another Beginning Point: First we looked at the WDRA Mandates:

WDRA “Expanded” Mandates:

1. To Maintain and Safely Operate the Westmeath Recreation Centre facility and Understand the Need for full Legislative Compliance:
 - a. There is now much stronger enforcement of Ministry of Labour legislation (eg. health & safety), Ministry of Environment legislation (eg. waste management and chemical handling) and Technical Standards & Safety Authority (TSSA) legislation (eg. boiler & pressure inspections).
 - b. Ignorance is no longer an excuse for non-compliance; closures and/or jail now a distinct possible consequence. The men and women who managed this place even as recently as five years ago would be amazed at how much has changed in this area. Strict compliance is enforced – over 50 pieces of legislation cover the managing of arenas now.
 - c. Paperwork: Procedures, manuals and correct documentation must be in place and are required to manage compliance.
2. To rent the WRC facilities, indoor and outdoor, to a range of user groups or individuals throughout the year.
3. To use sound business practices in the financial administration of the business and provide auditable financial records
4. To present and operate a range of outdoor and indoor events – sports, recreation, community building, hobby and leisure events – as part of the delivery of recreational services in the Township of Whitewater Region
5. To recruit, train and value the volunteer workforce
6. To promote and publicize events, communicate openly and comprehensively the work of the association and foster awareness of the Recreation Association in the community at large
7. To best support the spirit of community building (Social Capital) and have the WRC serve as a gathering centre and hub for all residents.

As we worked our way through and analysed these 7 mandates we were constantly asking: Are we currently handling them well? Or could we do better? What areas need further attention? What areas have not been given sufficient attention? What new areas should we address?

We came up against the new realities we will need to handle in the future.

Changing Usages and Innovative Thinking required to handle the New Realities of the Future

Realities for the WDRA: Future “Game-Changers”

- Health & Fitness of primary importance over **all** ages
- Fewer children playing organized hockey = less hours of ice time required
- Shifting demographics = greater % of pop. in 50+ age group
- Under servicing or not servicing the adult residents
- New programming or facility usage needed to emphasis Health & Fitness

Realities in Rural Eastern Ontario: Bleak Financial and Health Concerns

- Low population growth,
- Higher unemployment,
- Higher % of pop. over 65 years of age
- Heart disease, hypertension and obesity rates higher than in rest of province
- Lower median income
- Heavy reliance on residential property tax
- Dearth of commercial and industrial taxpayers
- Crown land, forests and farmland at zero or much lower rates of taxation
- No strategic planning done for future recreation facilities

Dilemma: Without economic prosperity or huge tax increases, future Infrastructure maintenance demands on small municipalities such as Whitewater will create huge challenges.

So in the strategic planning process we have looked at:

- A) Where You Are
- B) Where You Want To Be
- C) How You Get There

What do we know for sure? Small communities with aging arenas will be faced with crippling debt burdens, will need to change and to employ unorthodox or “out of the box” thinking:

- Synthetic ice panels laid on the rink’s cement pad and requiring no artificial ice plant, no Zamboni flooding, no large hydro or energy costs. Used year round.
- Natural Freezing in cold weather months, shortened season, tennis, carpet bowling, badminton etc, on the cement pad in other three seasons.
- Administrative operation of the arena side of the WDRA business needs to be tightened up with improved marketing, invoicing and overview.
- Operating the arena in any capacity is reliant on volunteer base and sufficient market need.

The incoming board of management will need to exhibit strong leadership for this Centre and this community. At the April 2nd Board Meeting a motion was passed to direct the incoming Board to begin implementing this report's recommendations. The implementation of the recommendations will be played out I hope over the next year or two.

I also hope that the municipal council will begin to give some study to how best to plan for the many game-changers we will all see in the future.

Q & A Period:

Two Motions tabled for adoption and implementation of the Strategic Planning and Feasibility Study FINAL REPORT at the Annual General Meeting, April 16th, 2012.

- 1. The General Membership of the WDRA accepts and ratifies the Strategic Planning and Feasibility Study Final Report, March 2012, as presented at the April 16th, 2012 Annual General Meeting.**

Moved: Godfrey D'Aoust

Seconded: Cathy Williamson

Majority in Favour. Passed

- 2. The General Membership of the WDRA instructs the incoming 2012-13 Board of Management to begin the Implementation of the Recommendations set out in the Strategic Planning and Feasibility Study Final Report, March 2012, as presented at the April 16th, 2012 Annual General Meeting.**

Moved: Godfrey D'Aoust

Seconded: D'Arcy McMullen

Majority in Favour. Passed