

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS/RECOMMENDATIONS

PROPONENT: Town of Gimli
PROPOSAL NAME: South Harbour Front Development

CLASS OF DEVELOPMENT: Two
TYPE OF DEVELOPMENT: Recreation (Marina)
CLIENT FILE NO.: 4366.00

OVERVIEW:

The Proposal was received on August 11, 1998. It was dated August 10, 1998. The advertisement of the proposal was as follows:

“A Proposal has been filed by Dillon Consulting Limited on behalf of the Town of Gimli for the construction of a 150 berth marina complex immediately south of the existing harbour. A new pier would be constructed south of the existing south pier, and a new wharf would be constructed along the west side of the area which would be enclosed by the new pier. Floating finger piers would then extend east from the new wharf. Some additional infilling of shoreline is proposed to the west of the new wharf, and some dredging within the enclosed area is proposed. Construction is proposed to begin in October, 1998, with completion scheduled by the early summer of 1999.”

The Proposal was advertised in the Gimli/Arborg Interlake Spectator on Monday, August 31, 1998. It was placed in the Main, Centennial, Eco-Network and Selkirk Community Library public registries, and in the Town of Gimli office. It was distributed to TAC members on August 24, 1998. The closing date for comments from members of the public and TAC members was September 30, 1998.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC:

The disposition of public comments is discussed in the Discussion section of this summary.

Petition 1 – residents of the Town of Gimli Requesting a further review of the project because of its potential for negative environmental impact. Public hearing requested to address these concerns. (53 signatures)

Petition 2 – residents of the Town of Gimli Requesting a further review of the project because of its potential for negative environmental impact. (No request for a public hearing. 16 signatures, including several duplicates from Petition 1.)

This project began as a proposal to spruce up the harbour area for the Pan Am Games. It has grown from a small undertaking to an overly ambitious project which may cost as much as \$5 million. The proposal has developed beyond that described in the Environment Act Proposal. In the EAP, 150 new slips and a new breakwater are described as the major construction. In the enclosed copy of the most recent proposal, the scope of the development has been significantly enlarged and to our knowledge has not received further environmental study. [Note: the landscape architect's plan included with the petition indicates that the presently proposed parking area would be converted to a waterfront performance park with amphitheatre space. Some further alterations are shown in the area forming the transition between the infill area and the existing south beach. These alterations would connect the existing beach to the infill area and continue a lakefront pathway. The Proposal indicates that the majority of parking space would be removed following the Pan Am Games and converted to recreational green space.] Some residents are concerned about the financial (tax) impact, congestion, noise and quality of life issues which are likely to result from this development. However, the concern is primarily with the environmental impact on the small cove south of the area to be developed. In Appendix A of the EAP, a number of significant negative environmental effects are noted. These concerns were raised on the basis of the smaller project rather than the one now being proposed. We do not know how the increased size will impact on these problem areas and we believe further study is vital.

It is our contention that no development potentially attracting untold numbers of visitors should be undertaken until sewage and lagoon problems are resolved. No discussion was identified in the EAP report on the effect of the effluent from the R.M. of Gimli which discharges into the water south of the harbour. The buildup of vegetation and scum in the water this year has been extreme. Is the effluent a factor? Diminishing the water mass and flow, the continual discharge of R.M. effluent and the near-critical state of the Town's lagoon and sewage system just south of this area would seem to further threaten the freshness and health of the lake in this small cove. Along with the effect on the lake, environmental concerns also include the long-range impact on the sewage system with the influx of anticipated visitors to Gimli. The sewage problem should be resolved first and take priority over the proposed tourist area expansion. The urgency to get this project underway is alarming, especially in view of the fact that existing facilities were adequate for the Pan Am trials held this summer. If approved now, construction will begin before the full potential environmental impact is examined.

The fact that the Town began to reclaim this area a few years ago without a licence to do so, dumped hazardous waste material into the lake, and finally reclaimed more of the lake than was approved, does not inspire trust and confidence about the present proposal. We urgently request the slowing down of this project's licensing until all issues, environmental and financial, can be better understood. We do not oppose some upgrading of the south harbour area. It is our contention that the scope of the proposed plan threatens water quality, increases pond grass growth and will put an undue burden on the Town's lagoon and sewage system. Many unresolved issues such as dredging the lake also remain unanswered.

Betty Schwartz The question unanswered is whether this project represents sustainable development. What will it do to the lake in this small cove, how will about 1,000 taxpayers support it long range, and to what extent will it support a way of life for Gimli residents? Many were lured to Gimli with promises of lower taxes, and a safe, quiet and peaceful lifestyle close to water. We now see the beginning destruction of all of this and the breaking of promises that brought us here. We believe that human beings are also part of an environment, and equally vulnerable to major changes in such a small community.

Lorraine and Thomas Thompson Oppose the development for several reasons: 1. The property belongs to the Betel Foundation and the Federal Government. There is no approval for the Town to annex any part of the area proposed for the South Harbour Development. How can the provincial Environment Department conduct an environmental assessment review on proposed construction affecting Crown Land? 2. The Town has for years dumped concrete, rebar, contaminated soil, asphalt, etc. south of the existing harbour without approval. None of the material dumped into this land reclamation meets the standards established by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. 3. If the provincial Environment Department has the approval to act on behalf of the federal government, how can the two governments justify permitting the Town to side-step due process for several years. 4. The Town claims it needs approval to complete construction in time for the Pan-Am Games. The existing facilities are adequate according to Pan-Am officials. 5. The Town exceeded the authorized infilling of the lakebed by going 200 metres more than approved. This meant that 20,000 to 25,000 tons of contaminated soil was dumped into Lake Winnipeg in violation of conditions imposed by Fisheries and Oceans. There have been no studies to date to assess the impact of this contamination. Our property fronts directly on this construction project. In the past two years, excessive dead fish are washed up on shore, seagulls and pelicans are noticeably absent from the area, there is extensive weed development, unidentified extensive black debris (possibly plant forms) has washed up on shore, extensive sand deposits now exist where none existed previously, at the expense of properties further south. Not only is there contamination of the lake, but natural lake currents have been drastically altered.

Karen Smith, Val Moier, Bob Peterson and Helga Malis The south harbour area tends to be very shallow and doesn't get the same wave action as the north beach. The weeds and grass growing in the south harbour area are phenomenal. The water, being more stagnant now, encourages this growth. There is some question as to whether pleasure boats which may be dumping their garbage adds to this problem. Does the harbour authority know for sure that all marina users are using the dumping station? How will it be if there are even more boats in the harbour? Do we know if the dredging of the harbour will continue to be handled by the federal government if the harbour is mainly a pleasure craft site? In the rush to reclaim land and build on it, have enough environmental studies been done and are the materials being used for fill clean enough?

Will the shoreline suffer more? Does a project of this magnitude which taxes the environment further enhance the quality of life for residents which are being asked to pay for the project? How can we rush a mammoth project through in order to accommodate the Pan-Am games when we have learned that the construction of a new pier is not a requirement for the games. Time should be taken to study this more so that a healthy lifestyle for our community is ensured, not only for tourists who visit but don't have the well-being of the area uppermost in their minds.

Joanne O'Hara We have watched the effects of the reclamation of land over the past year. The growth of weeds in the water, the lack of movement of water in the bay has turned our once beautiful water into a slough, full of growth and slime. With the further reclamation of land, what will become of our swimming place? Wildlife formerly frequented what is now a dump, full of cement, copper piping, asphalt and other materials. Even after the initial reclamation, birds returned. They have not returned since the most recent work was undertaken. All this for a few berths and some parking spaces for some people who come out to spend the day. The current situation attracts littering. A long hard look should be taken at the implications of the project – not only at the concerns about swimming, but also about the problem of the pollution in the harbour itself. There is no water movement at all and they are talking about enlarging it. The oil slicks, fuel and whatever else floating around in there is disgusting and likely harmful to human health.

COMMENTS FROM THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE:

Manitoba Environment – Eastern-Interlake Region The Proposal indicates that some of the fill used contained low levels of contaminants, although all levels were below criteria for the protection of human health and aquatic life. In the future only clean fill or clean recycled fill should be used for infill. On page 21, proposed environmental management practices indicate disposal of dredge material will follow procedures acceptable to Provincial Fisheries Branch as used by Small Craft Harbours Branch. What are these procedures? Concerning vegetation, the proposal indicates that high nutrient levels are in part due to lawn fertilization adjacent to the lake. The City of Winnipeg, Town of Gimli, R.M. of Gimli, Town of Winnipeg Beach and numerous other sewage outfalls discharge towards or into the south basin of Lake Winnipeg and are likely even greater contributing factors toward a high nutrient level and weed growth.

Disposition:

The comment concerning fill can be addressed as a licence condition. Additional information was obtained respecting disposal practices for dredged material.

Manitoba Environment - Water Quality Management Material used as fill must be clean and free of contaminants, garbage and other deleterious substances that would affect water quality. It is recognized that construction and subsequent dredging of the area will cause an increase in suspended sediments, turbidity and possibly nutrient levels through resuspension of sediment. However, this condition should be limited to the construction area and should dissipate soon after construction is completed. Dredged

materials from construction and periodic dredging of the harbour should be disposed of at a site approved by the proper regulatory agency. Although concerns have been expressed regarding excessive algal growth and fecal coliform bacteria developing as a result of the proposed marina and breakwater, this is unlikely. Fecal coliform bacteria will not “develop” in this area. Previous coliform counts from the existing harbour indicate that levels are below the Manitoba Surface Water Quality Objectives for primary recreation. Algal growth is likely to be limited by water clarity, and may develop on macrophytes close to shore. Similarly, rooted aquatic plants may develop in those areas where the substrate is suitable and wave action is minimal.

Disposition:

As discussed above, additional material was requested concerning dredging. The disposal of dredged material can be addressed as a licence condition.

Historic Resources Branch No concerns.

Mines Branch No concerns.

Highway Planning and Design No transportation related concerns.

Community Economic Development Branch The proposal should more fully address the parking and traffic impacts from the operation of the expanded facility.

Disposition:

More information was requested to address this comment.

Natural Resources Fish habitat will be lost due to the dredging and infilling proposed in this project. Although the assessment indicates that the proponent has committed to exploring the replacement of lost fish habitat with Manitoba Fisheries Branch and DFO, no definitive consideration has as yet been given to what the exact nature and extent of the habitat loss will be or how or to what degree this habitat would be replaced. This subject needs to be more fully addressed by the proponent. Consideration should be given to the possibility of runoff entering the lake from the parking lot, which would be situated adjacent to the lake. Provisions should be developed for the refueling of boats in the expanded marina. Construction plans for the breakwater should not allow for isolated bird landing areas.

Disposition:

Comments concerning design considerations can be addressed through licence conditions. Additional information was requested to address the remaining comments.

Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency Western Economic Diversification and Fisheries and Oceans have provided notification that an environmental assessment under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act will be conducted by federal officials

with respect to the project. Additional information is being requested. Environment Canada, the Canadian Coast Guard and Natural Resources Canada have offered to provide specialist advice in accordance with section 12(3) of the Act.

Fisheries and Oceans DFO has concerns about the destruction of fish habitat which will result from the infilling activity associated with this harbour expansion. Other areas of concern include but are not limited to the potential for harmful alteration of fish habitat due to shoreline erosion associated with the breakwater construction and sedimentation associated with the proposed dredging activity. Based on the information provided, this project will result in the harmful alteration, disruption or destruction of fish habitat, thus requiring an Authorization pursuant to Section 35(2) of the Fisheries Act. In addition, DFO will require an environmental assessment of the project under Section 5 of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act and is declaring itself a Responsible Authority at this time. We expect that Environment Canada will be providing advice with respect to surface water quality and potential toxicity to aquatic organisms due to infilling and dredging activities.

Disposition:

All additional information which is received concerning the project will be provided to DFO. DFO is reviewing a proposal from the Proponent concerning fisheries mitigation, and is expecting to issue an Authorization for the project in November, 1998. No additional information is being requested by DFO through Manitoba Environment.

Other Federal Agencies In addition to DFO, Western Economic Diversification and the Canadian Coast Guard indicated a desire to participate in the provincial environmental assessment of the project. These agencies will also be provided with all additional material concerning the project as it becomes available. None of these agencies has requested that Manitoba Environment obtain additional information on their behalf.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Additional information was requested on October 8, 1998 to address concerns in five areas: dredging procedures, parking and traffic impacts, other infrastructure (such as sewer and water facilities), future development plans and sand transport impacts. A response to the request was provided in a letter of October 14, 1998. This response included detailed design drawings prepared after the filing of the Proposal, and additional information on fisheries habitat compensation. Further information on proposed dredging procedures was provided in a letter of October 16, 1998. Both the October 14 and 16 letters are attached.

DISCUSSION:

Of the public environmental concerns noted, a number are addressed in the Proposal and the remaining concerns are discussed in more detail in the additional information. With respect to the scope of the project, the differences between the Proposal and the final information received are minor in terms of aquatic or other environmental impacts. The additional information indicates that parking space on the project area will be substantially reduced in the final design, and additional landscaped areas will be provided between streets and parking areas and the beaches. It appears that once the project was completed and landscaped, there would be less likelihood of unauthorized infilling and littering in the project area in comparison to the existing situation.

A number of public comments respecting water quality were received. Coincidentally, comments were provided by Water Quality Management on some of the public concerns. Current water quality problems in the south harbour area appear to be related to the lack of wave action and water mixing. The relatively small amount of additional infilling which is proposed will not affect this, as the general shape of the shoreline area and its exposure to wind and waves would not be significantly changed. Concerns about additional nutrient loading due to the Development are addressed in the additional information. The Development itself is not expected to generate significant demands on the Town's water and sewer infrastructure.

Written and verbal public concerns were expressed over the sewage disposal practices of boats using the existing harbour facilities. Although this is not a direct concern regarding the Proposal, the current marina sewage situation was discussed with Eastern-Interlake regional staff. Existing federal and provincial regulations are in place to control sewage disposal, and monitoring and enforcement activities occur as appropriate. This situation would not be expected to change with additional use of an expanded harbour.

Public concerns about project financing and property tax impacts are not addressable.

PUBLIC HEARING:

Public environmental concerns have been addressed in the information which is now available on the project. A public hearing is not recommended.

RECOMMENDATION:

All comments received on the Proposal concerning environmental impacts have been addressed or can be addressed as licence conditions. The additional material

received on the Proposal should be forwarded to interested members of the public for information.

It is recommended that the Development be licensed under The Environment Act subject to the limits, terms and conditions as described on the attached Draft Environment Act Licence. It is further recommended that enforcement of the Licence be assigned to the Eastern-Interlake Region.

PREPARED BY:

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