

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR: Growing concerns around Fiddle Park redevelopment plans

Dear Editor,

I am writing today to express my growing concerns regarding the Town of Shelburne's proposed redevelopment plans for Fiddle Park. The recent decisions made by the Town Council threaten not only the future of beloved community events but also risk undermining existing local businesses that have long been staples in our region.

It is my hope that the Council will reconsider these plans, which appear to be moving forward without sufficient consideration for the broader impacts on our community.

The recent letters from the organizers of 'Haunt in the Park' and 'Pickin' in the Park' reveal a glaring disconnect between the Council's vision and the needs of our residents.

These two events have not only brought joy and entertainment to thousands of attendees but have also fostered a sense of unity and tradition that is integral to our town's identity.

The suggestion that these events could simply be relocated to less suitable venues, such as a cattle shelter or temporary tents, is neither practical nor respectful of the effort that these dedicated organizers have invested over the years. Forcing these cherished events to adapt to inferior conditions or potentially cancel them altogether is an unacceptable outcome.

It is particularly troubling that these redevelopment plans are being pushed through without addressing the immediate needs of these community gatherings.

Shelburne's own surveys showed a lack of overwhelming support for certain elements of the redevelopment, yet those elements like the proposed amphitheatre are being prioritized at great expense.

The construction timeline, which will disrupt access to Fiddle Park in 2025, fails to consider its detrimental effects on events that have become a part of our town's cultural fabric.

The Council's lack of flexibility on this matter is disheartening, especially given that reasonable accommodations have been suggested by event organizers, such as containing construction to specific areas of the park to allow events to continue safely.

Moreover, the inclusion of a mini golf course in the redevelopment plans raises significant concerns.

There is already a well-established, family-owned mini golf business '10 and 10 Mini Putt' less than 20 kilometres away.

The creation of a competing facility at Fiddle Park would not only divert potential customers from this local business but also undermine the spirit of supporting our existing community entrepreneurs.

It is difficult to understand why the Town would prioritize investing in a new facility that directly competes with a business that has served our community for years. Instead, resources would be better spent enhancing the unique features that make Fiddle Park a special venue for events and gatherings.

The funds being allocated toward these developments could be redirected to improve the facilities that directly support the events we already have, ensuring they can continue for years to come.

For instance, the \$250,000 earmarked for a mini turf field could be better utilized to upgrade the infrastructure that supports 'Haunt

in the Park? and 'Pickin' in the Park.' These events bring significant economic, social, and cultural benefits to Shelburne, drawing visitors from near and far who contribute to our local businesses. It is short-sighted to risk losing this positive impact by proceeding with construction plans that could render these events unfeasible.

At the very least, the Council should consider postponing the redevelopment or phasing it in a way that minimizes disruption. This would allow the events scheduled for 2025 to proceed without interruption, while still allowing for thoughtful improvements to Fiddle Park in the future.

A balanced approach could ensure that both the park's redevelopment and the continuation of these beloved events can coexist, ultimately benefiting the entire community.

I urge the Town Council to listen to the concerns of its residents, event organizers, and local business owners. The community deserves a redevelopment plan that enhances, rather than disrupts, the vibrancy of our town.

By prioritizing what truly matters - supporting our events and local businesses - Shelburne can continue to thrive as a place where tradition and progress go hand in hand.

Sincerely,

Kris Anthony

Shelburne