

LOCAL



HAMILTON SPECTATOR FILE PHOTO

The West Harbour Waterfront Recreational Master Plan will chart the development of the harbour for the next 20 to 30 years. It is being unveiled tomorrow night.

City floats west harbour plan

Boating clubs wary of the four alternatives, which all call for relocations

BY PETER VAN HARTEN

The city-owned west waterfront has been a battle zone in past years between the city and boating groups over the location of the waterfront trail, access to the water and security of boats.

The West Harbour Waterfront Recreational Master Plan, being unveiled to the public tomorrow night, will also mean major change for the boaters.

Each of four alternatives would shift some of the clubs, which lease their facilities.

City planners Christine Lee-Morrison and Justin Readman stress that the master plan is designed to keep the clubs in the harbour.

Everyone who wants to stay at the harbour can remain, said Readman.

Councillor Chad Collins is enthusiastic about the plan and says the city needs to capitalize on the lands it took over from the former Hamilton Harbour Commissioners.

The plan will chart the development of the west harbour for the next 20 to 30

The winds of change

Alternative A

A public marina and yachting and power boating in the main basin by the Royal Hamilton Yacht Club area but putting smaller recreational boating and sailing clubs in Macassa Bay.

Alternative B

Two marinas in the main basin, one public and one central facility for clubs and putting smaller recreational

boating in Macassa Bay.

Alternative C

A public marina with club facilities in the main basin and putting smaller recreational boating in the west side of the main basin with no boating in Macassa Bay.

Alternative D

A centralized public marina and club facilities in the main basin and recreational boating in the Strachan Channel and no boating in Macassa Bay.

years and Collins says changes would likely draw even more boating enthusiasts to the harbour.

It's up to the clubs whether they are willing to centralize in one location, but the city is not looking to displace them from the waterfront, he said.

"I understand people are very reluctant to facilitate change, for good reason; they have been there for a long time and they were there when nobody else wanted to be there," said Collins of

the yachting, sailing and rowing clubs.

But putting them together may free up more waterfront space for commercial recreational opportunities.

Restoring a deteriorating shoreline and restoring fish habitat would likely cost millions, he said.

Collins said Burlington has been getting all the attention in past months for its waterfront plans "but when you look at all the land we have available to use, there is so much we can do here."

Bill Mitchell, commodore of the Macassa Bay Yacht Club, isn't happy that all proposed alternatives will require his club to relocate.

But Paul Vayda, a past commodore of the Royal Hamilton Yacht Club, said he is optimistic about the "eye-opening" proposals.

The city has listened to suggestions for the boating community in its planning, he said.

The city planners were not looking for Band-Aid solutions for the west harbour but wanted to do things in "a big way" with new seawalls and breakwalls and a total redesign.

"This is not just planting a few trees and making it look pretty," Vayda said. "Stand-pat was not an option and they want the most bang for the buck.

"Would we prefer to just stay where we are? Probably, but that's not in the cards," said Vayda.

The plan is being presented at the Workers Art and Heritage Centre at 51 Stuart St. from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. The public is encouraged to offer comments. pvanharten@thespec.com 905-526-3328