

Good Evening Mayor Grantham, Deputy Major McGuire and Councilors,

We are writing Council to inform you of a new non-for-profit athletic organization that has been formed in Melbourne, Ontario with the goal of bringing recreational youth and adult sports back to our little community. We are the Melbourne Sports and Recreation Association and our initial efforts will be focused on reviving the old baseball diamonds located on the Melbourne Fairgrounds owned by the Melbourne Agricultural Society. Currently we are comprised of three (3) dedicated members who also serve as directors for this venture. It is important to note that we are all fathers with children of similar age and have the same dream of seeing our young ones use the same facilities our neighbors and friends once used as kids.

Over the last eight (8) weeks, there has been a lot of moving parts. Finding like-minded individuals to combine efforts to make this happen was the easiest part. From gaining full incorporated non-for profit status, to forming our board of directors and assigning roles to completing some of the physical works at the ball diamond in preparation of planting grass seed before the winter months, things have moved relatively quick. What we found along the way is that we have a growing number residents that are in support of our cause with many willing to donate their time and resources along the way.

The Melbourne Agricultural Society has initially been a gracious host and we thank them for their support. Works began many weeks ago with many of the current works and repairs focused on the playing field. Below is summary of the activities, works and volunteer hours completed to date:

Wednesday, August 16, 2023 – we addressed the Melbourne Agricultural Society Board of Directors Meeting as an agenda item about the idea of letting a group us clean up the diamonds in preparation of planting grass seed with hopes of using the baseball diamonds for youth baseball next year. Permission was granted to proceed with our plans.

Sunday, September 3, 2023 – a group of us attended the main ball diamond to commence with the cleanup. Approximately 24 man hours was worked to weed and mow around fencing, benches and stadium seating as well as plow the grounds in preparation of laying top soil in the outfield.

Friday, September 15, 2023 – we meet with well-known local company who the owner has agreed to donate grass seed and fertilizer and the use of his drill seeder to seed the infield and outfield in mid to late October 2023. We value this at over \$4000.

Thursday, September 21, 2023 – corporation documents were submitted and fees paid to complete requirements to become a non-for-profit organization with intentions to act as a charitable organization in the future.

Saturday, September 23, 2023 - a large group of us attended the main ball diamond to lay out future base and baseline locations and spread top soil. This accounted for 12 approximately volunteer man hours. Approximately 140 cubic meters of screened top soil was donated by a local a local company. The dump truck time to deliver the top soil was donated by another local company and the operator time was volunteered. This was approximately 10 dump truck loads accounting for 32 man hours. A bulldozer and operator was donated by a local contractor for 10 hours to strip the outfield and warning track and the level the delivered top soil. The value of the top soil, the dozer and dump truck was valued to date at over \$13,000 with more expected in the coming weeks.

Monday, September 25, 2023 – we engaged with Hydro One so their staff can develop a plan, design and costs to re-connect the power to the facility including needed to operate our stadium lights and canteen building for future food and drink sales. An on-site with Hydro One is expected in the coming weeks with hopes of having a clearer idea what we will need moving forward.

Thursday, September 28, 2023 – We held our inaugural meeting. Minutes were documented and next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 26, 2023.

Friday, October 6, 2023 –We received our non-for-profit business documents certificate of incorporation.

We still have approximately 12-14 loads of screened top soil left to spread with grass seed needing to be planted no later than October 21, 2023 to allow for enough time to germinate before the winter months. A skid steer and dump truck has been donated by a local company to complete these works once weather permits with several people in the community ready to assist with whatever we need.

There are still a number of items that still have to be completed to prepare the fields for baseball in the spring which we are planning to discuss at our next board meeting on October 26, 2023. We recognize that there is an incredible amount of work remaining. Over the course of this fall and winter months, we will be engaging local youth and adult baseball leagues to gauge their interest in using our facility and gain their commitment for the 2024 season. We have already received some excellent resources for program development from our friends at the Baseball Hall of Fame Diamonds in St. Marys, Ontario. The Curator and Hall of Fame President Scott Crawford has been an invaluable resource thus far and we will continue to lean on him and his guidance as we move forward.

On October 21, 2023, the Melbourne Legion is hosting a softball reunion which we plan to attend. We hope to meet and learn from those who have lifelong memories of competitive play. There have been many old team pictures circulating through social media recently and we hope to meet many of the former participants.

In addition to a formal introduction of our cause, this letter is to inform Council that our organization will require funding support to make this dream a reality. Over the next few weeks, our group will be submitting for several grant applications at multiple sources including the Blue Jay's Foundation Field of Dream grant. This program is dedicated to youth sports and improving sports facilities just like this one and we hope to be a recipient of it ahead of our 2024 season. We will of course be applying to the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc for financial assistance through the Community Event Program (CEP). Although we expect to have substantial support locally, we hope the Municipality will join our cause.

Our biggest need at the moment is to create facility conditions suitable for baseball again by spring of 2024 as the ground have been neglected for many years. Support could be distributed to complete fencing repairs and make improvements player's benches and spectator seating. Funding would also assist with costs to purchase bases, a chalk-line machine and a mower to maintain the field turf and surrounding area. Funding may also be allocated to repair the weather damage to the adjacent covered buildings such as the pavilion roof and canteen repairs and cleaning. Each will serve an important purpose in supporting tournament play and day-to-day activities. A budget of estimated costs is currently being prepared by our team which we expected to be completed by the end of the month.

We would appreciate the opportunity to return to Council at a future date as a delegation item for Council to meet the immediate members of this group and to make a formal presentation to garner the support of Council. We would like to thank the Council of the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc for your consideration of this letter. We are hopeful that a partnership can be reached between our two groups in the name of bringing youth and adult sports back to our village and re-establish ourselves again as a hot bed for baseball in South Western Ontario.

Respectfully Yours,

Matthew Howard

Matthew Howard, Vice-President  
Melbourne Sports and Recreation Association