

ELMWOOD COMMUNITY SERVICE ASSOCIATION

PO Box 99
Elmwood, ON
N0G 1S0



October 31st, 2025

Attention:

Brockton Mayor Chris Peabody
Members of Brockton Municipal Council

The Elmwood Community Service Association respectfully requests that the Brockton Council revisit its selection of the Elmwood Community Settlement Area logo. Our Association has concerns about both the process involved in the selection of this logo, and the disconnect between the logo selected by Brockton Council and the community's historical and current branding. In addition, the entire logo process is symbolic of a deeper, more concerning issue, addressed later in this letter.

It is disheartening that Brockton Council members were not more aware of the historic connection between the elm tree and the Community of Elmwood. This connection remains prominent today as was evident when an on-line community profile of Elmwood was released by Grey Roots on October 12. The media release featured how a giant elm tree, once located at the intersection of what is now County Road 10 and Concession 10 Brockton, became symbolic of the heart of the village of Elmwood, providing the village name as well as building materials for the early structures. It is ironic that several members of Brockton Council are on-line followers of Grey Roots.

On the Brockton website, Mayor Peabody is quoted, "A well-crafted community brand plays a vital role in communicating a settlement's identity – its history, aspirations and distinguishing features." How can it make any sense for any new logo to totally dismiss so much community history, identity, and branding?

The Logo Process

When the preliminary logo designs were released in May, the Elmwood Community Service Association was shocked to see no elm tree image as part of the logo, and further, that there had been no attempt to reach out to any community contacts. As one member said after looking over the options, "apparently Elmwood is a field." Association members provided feedback to the Brockton staff indicating that there really needs to be an elm tree image in the second draft. Please also note that the initial online voting, allowed no option for someone to provide feedback or suggestions unless one had already voted for one of the four images; no feedback unless one voted for an undesirable option.

Members of the Association did contact municipal staff who offered thanks for the feedback and said the information would get to the rebranding team.

A short time later, communication came back to the Association asking if we could help by providing an elm tree image since the developers did not have an elm tree image. At least two people emailed images taken from Homecoming and Elmwood Community Service Association logos. Imagine our disappointment when the final draft images included some trees but not a recognizable elm image. Once again, feedback was provided.

We were told that initial logos provided by developers were generated from information taken from a community profile paragraph on the Brockton website, and nothing more. Apparently, the community

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profiles could use sprucing-up! The first step should have been to revisit this paragraph to determine if the information was appropriate. It is disheartening that a suitable elm image was not found. Would it not be appropriate to simply ask those community groups who know their community best, what images would best represent their community? This would have been genuine, respectful community consultation.

At the August 12th Brockton Council meeting when final approval was given, Councillor Steven Travale indicated that during the second round of voting, two of the logo images featured elm tree logos. The Elmwood Community Service Association and most residents asked would disagree.

Taking a deeper look at logos for other settlement communities, the Walkerton logo clearly emphasises the Saugeen River and includes an urban image. This makes sense. Chepstow and Cargill logos demonstrate a connection with ponds, forests and rivers. The Elmwood logo represents only agriculture. Following an online Brockton Council meeting we noted that several Councillors spoke about how nice it would be to have a sheaf of wheat in one of the logos. Is that why Elmwood's logo featured a sheaf image? We do not dislike the agricultural images. Our Association proudly supports our vibrant agricultural community, but there is more here! Grey Bruce Farmer's Week takes place inside the Community Centre, an important community hub. Would the Community Centre be an appropriate image? Our border location on County Road 10? Our Elm?

If communities like Elmwood, Cargil and Chepstow are to be envisioned as great places to live, perhaps some symbol of settlement should be evident in all the logos. Looking back in time at these settlement areas, the difference in populations and services between them and Walkerton would not be so significant. Unfortunately, it appears our rural communities are only being portrayed as open fields and wetland spaces.

On-Line Voting for an Elmwood Logo

The image of the cow and the field was determined by an on-line vote. The Association feels that a Council which truly understood and appreciated our unique location and circumstances of our community, would have taken the time to consider more than just the vote count.

It seems highly unlikely that "the majority" of on-line voters throughout Brockton would be aware of the historical importance of the Elmwood Elm or of our current community branding. Voters cannot be blamed for voting for a nice cow and field image, but surely the assumption that voters throughout Brockton know the past, or even the present story of Elmwood, is laughable and creates a clear disadvantage for, and disservice to, our small Community. At the June 24th Council meeting, Council was told that "by far, the majority of voting participants" were from Walkerton. Councillor Kuhnke supported the final vote saying the logo vote for "Elmwood is statistically clear and I have no problem with going with the logo choice because that is what the people want". Which people? In his next sentence though, he also recognized that most of the votes came from Walkerton.

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Half of the Elmwood community is in West Grey, and therefore, was not aware or likely eligible for the vote. The small population Brockton portion of the Elmwood community has little chance to out-vote the rest of the municipality, especially without any opportunity to suggest appropriate images and provide a rationale to “the majority” of on-line voters who do not know the community. We DEPEND upon Council to be our voice and to represent our interests. How many times during an election campaign is the following sentence heard? “I am asking for your support to be YOUR voice on Brockton Council.”

At the same meeting, on June 24th Councillor Elphick spoke about the logo initiative, saying “this is an identity and a brand that we want our residents and ratepayers to get behind. We want them to embrace it as a sub-brand of the overall municipality of Brockton and that starts by honouring the information and the feedback they give us in the process.” It was mentioned that a small group of people from Elmwood wanted an elm tree image. Several Councillors praised the amount of work done on the logos and trumpeted the community consultation. Several Councillors did mention that perhaps an elm tree image would have been nice but “the majority” vote was clear. Councillor Clake supported the second vote results, saying that it was the most “fair process” for selecting a logo”. We disagree! Mayor Peabody said, “we need to keep the Elm in Elmwood.” Who spoke up saying “hold on; perhaps Elmwood’s interests were not being respected?” Nobody!

Mr. Travale indicated that the process “just can’t go on forever”, and that settlements like Elmwood “would just have to accept it as it is.” Residents of Elmwood either had no idea of any logo vote or design initiative or felt that the images offered were just not good enough. This is likely why, as Mr. Travale noted, “second round engagement was down.” The two designs with some form of image of a tree combined for over 47% of the vote. Imagine the results with a true elm image and with everyone in the municipality aware of the community elm connection? The Association believes Brockton residents, if informed properly, make excellent decisions. To his credit, Mr. Travale did indicate to Council that he felt there was support for an elm tree in the logo yet still supported the wheat field image.

Continuing to watch the Council meeting video, the Association found it strange that Mr. Travale went on to say that the final logos did not really matter because Elmwood and other communities and organizations could continue to use their current imaging. He indicated that this endeavour was “for CIP purposes”. In no way does this align with the words from Councillor Elphick or messaging on Brockton media releases. CIP, we understand, refers to “Community Improvement Plan”. Further research of Council reports indicates that a key driver for this logo initiative was a request from Cargill for a community logo so as to meet eligibility criteria for “Spruce The Bruce” grants. The Elmwood Community Service Association congratulates and completely supports Cargill for pushing this topic. Wouldn’t it be wonderful for ALL of Brockton’s rural communities to share in the grant money which has been coming through programs like “Spruce The Bruce” for decades.

The Elmwood Community Service Association feels that ALL branding and imaging matters. Branding certainly matters to us! Rather than the words of Councillor Elphick about developing a logo which people can “get behind and embrace” this sounds more like rushing to “get things done” rather than “getting things done properly and respectfully.” This letter outlines our many concerns. This situation is

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simply not acceptable. We look forward to hearing from Council, in the near future, about options for next steps.

Deeper concern

The circumstances surrounding the logo issue is also indicative of Council's lack of understanding of Elmwood as a border community, shared by Brockton and West Grey. Virtually every customer at a recent community Wing Night had no idea the Brockton branding process was even taking place; and yes, this includes both residents of West Grey AND Brockton. At the best of times, community residents often feel that decisions and actions of councils make them feel apart from, and not a part of either municipality. Together, very dedicated community members from both municipalities work extremely hard to support the Elmwood community, our facilities, and special cultural events. Increasingly, the feeling is that our concerns are lost as municipalities concentrate upon the needs and wishes from "the majority" of residents rather than genuinely considering the needs of our community AND committing to the "harder work" of cooperating and collaborating with municipal neighbours to truly meet the needs of Elmwood. This is not just a Brockton issue; however, the first step to creating a better climate for cooperation is a commitment to listen.

Please know that the Elmwood Community Service Association welcomes any support from Brockton or West Grey, **preferably at the same time and working towards the same goals**, for Community Development. This partnership has worked in the past and we hope for opportunities in the future. There is work to do! There are signs of growth and numerous new families coming to our area. The need to improve parks, playgrounds, accessibility, green spaces and maintain our current facilities and services is evident.

We hope that Brockton Council is open to listening, respecting, and supporting our community. The Elmwood Community Service Association welcomes any opportunity for discussion on the community logo and on ways of supporting the Elmwood area. We await Council's response to these concerns.

On behalf of the Elmwood Community Service Association.

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