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March 11, 2020

Dear Chair Bridgeman and Members of the Planning Committee,

**Re: ZBA-45/19, By-law 2019-154 | Sports Courts and Recreational Areas in the Waterfront**

The Muskoka Lakes Association supports the initiative of the Planning Committee to review the minimum setbacks for sports courts and recreational surfaces from the shorelines.

We strongly agree with staff and the Planning Committee's concern about the adverse impact of tree removal and site alteration caused by constructing these surfaces close to our shorelines. Given what we now know about actual and predicted increasing frequency and intensity of storms in Muskoka, we must retain as many trees and other vegetation on waterfront properties as is reasonably possible to ensure adequate buffering for stormwater runoff absorption. Furthermore, our policies should be encouraging tree preservation given the important role forests play in helping to address climate change and providing wildlife habitat.

In its March 12, 2020 report to you, staff has suggested three options for the new definition of 'Sports Courts and Recreational Surfaces' in a proposed zoning by-law amendment that will establish a minimum 200' setback from the high water mark for these surfaces. We believe that Option 1 best accomplishes the stated objectives, with one change: the definition should not differentiate between permeable and non-permeable surfaces. Both permeable and non-permeable surfaces involve tree removal and site alteration that will damage our lakes' water quality through reduced absorption of stormwater runoff, so sports courts and recreational surfaces with both types of surfaces should be setback a minimum of 200' from the high water mark.

We also believe that Option 1 takes the better approach of not listing various recreational activities. Providing a list could create uncertainty as to whether an activity that is not specifically named is intended to be covered -- for example, bocce ball or some new sport that may be created in the future.

We also suggest that in allowing these facilities they should also be subject to lot coverage restrictions and tree protection plans.

We hope these comments are helpful.

Sincerely,

Deborah Martin-Downs  
Chair, Government and Land Use Committee, Muskoka Lakes Association

cc. David Pink, Director of Planning  
Rian Allen, Senior Planner