

Sent by email

September 2, 2022

Plan Muskoka
30 Howland Drive
Huntsville ON
P1H 2P9

Attention: Savas Varadas, Principal

Dear Mr. Varadas:

Re: Zoning By-law Amendment Application (Application No. ZA 29-2022) re 29 Island 26 LM (Taylor Island), Town of Gravenhurst

As you know, I am a representative of both the Muskoka Lakes Association (MLA) and the Friends of Muskoka (FOM). The MLA has approximately 2,200 members representing over 11,000 people and FOM has over 4,000 supporters.

ZBA

At the recent public meeting, you advised that you would be speaking to your client about whether he would be prepared to accept Special Provision 304 (total building floor area not to exceed 279 m² for each .4 hectares), modified to provide for a maximum of 14 resort commercial accommodation units. This would provide your client with exactly what he was asking for, with a modest cushion for the total building floor area to provide some flexibility. As you mentioned at the public meeting, proposed lot coverage is 6.5% or 2,847 m² and Special Provision 304 would permit up to 3,055 m², providing a cushion of 208 m² (2,239 ft.²).

While mainland parking and docking remains an important issue still to be resolved, we believe that the foregoing would go a long way towards addressing the concerns of our members/supporters.

Please let me know at your earliest convenience your client's position on this.

Downzoning

Downzoning was raised at the public meeting, but you were concerned that it may be difficult to achieve. I would ask you to reconsider this with your client. I suggest it is a viable option.

The cottages on Taylor Island and the surrounding area are zoned either RW-6 with a required lot frontage of 60 m (197') or RW-6A with a required lot frontage of 90 m (295'), pursuant to

Sections 14.2 and 14.3, respectively, of Gravenhurst's Comprehensive Zoning By-law 2010-04. Assuming a rezoning to the more favourable RW-6 designation and with 232 m of frontage, a total of 4 residential cottages would be permitted. This would obviate the need to develop a resort on an island, with the attendant requirement for additional mainland parking spaces and boat slips, among other things.

We note that there have been instances of successful downzoning of resorts to residential waterfront. The old Bangor Lodge comes to mind. Similarly, Marygrove (the former Glen Home Resort) on Lake Joseph was also downzoned and severed into residential lots.

The Township of Muskoka Lakes (TML) is updating its Official Plan and the process is nearing completion. The language regarding downzoning of resorts has been significantly enhanced. Section B11.11 c) of the current TML OP provides that the "conversion of the tourist commercial resort use to residential use shall not be permitted". I refer you to Section F3.6 a) of the draft TML OP dated June 28, 2022, which states that: "It is the goal of this Plan to retain existing resorts wherever possible. However, it is recognized that owners of resorts may wish to convert existing resorts to an alternative use for one or a combination of the reasons below: i) There is limited interest to continue operating the resort and the prospects of new ownership and/or management are limited; ii) Increasing regulatory requirements have had, or are likely to have, an impact on the ability of the resort to be viable; iii) Significant enhancements to the resort are required to compete in the marketplace; and/or, iv) Occupancy levels have been declining.

Section F3.6 f) goes on to state that: "Should conversion to residential uses be proposed, the form of the residential development proposed should be compatible with the density and scale of adjacent shoreline development in the area with respect to the frontage of the lot on the water and shall not be reflective of the density afforded to resort commercial accommodations."

A copy of TML OP, Section F3.6 is attached.

Nick McDonald, of Meridian Planning Consultants, is the consultant advising the District and TML regarding the update to the TML OP. In connection with the downzoning of resorts, he advocated for removing the prohibition on downzoning and references to employment lands and the need for a comprehensive review.

This property, the former Glen Echo Lodge, has not operated as a resort for 50 years (since 1972), and the loss of this commercially zoned property as a resort is not really a loss at all. In any event, resorts have not been the economic driver of the Muskoka economy for a very long time. One only has to look at the number of resorts in the District, which have declined from 554 in 1957 to 126 in 1991 (District MOP, Section F6-chart) to 32 waterfront resorts in 2018 (Altus report to the District dated May 6, 2020, page ii). The same trend is true for the Town of Gravenhurst.

Could you please check with Adam Ager to see what the Town of Gravenhurst's view is with respect to downzoning. Please also consider canvassing downzoning with your client.

Again, I believe our members/supporters would be interested in considering downzoning as an option.

I would be happy to discuss this further with you.

Yours very truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ken Pearce". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ken Pearce
Director, Vice-President and Secretary
Muskoka Lakes Association

Director and Secretary
Friends of Muskoka

Cell: (416) 476-4124

cc. Adam Ager, Manager of Planning Services, Town of Gravenhurst
Melissa Halford, Director of Development Services, Town of Gravenhurst
Laurie Thomson, President, Friends of Muskoka
Susan Eplett, President, Muskoka Lakes Association
Liz Lundell, Chair, Government and Land Use Committee, Muskoka Lakes Association