

July 10, 2023

Township of Muskoka Lakes  
1 Bailey Street  
Port Carling ON  
P0B 1J0

Dear Mayor Kelley and Councillors,

**Re: Proposed Procedural By-law Amendments  
July 12, 2023 Council Meeting - Agenda Item 9(a)4**

The Muskoka Lakes Association (“MLA”) and Friends of Muskoka (“FOM”) appreciate this opportunity to provide our comments on the proposed amendments to the Township’s Procedural By-law, as described in the report from Director Paroschy dated June 14, 2023.

1. Hybrid, Electronic and In-Person Meetings

The MLA and FOM support the proposed amendments providing three types of meetings available to Council and Committees: hybrid, electronic and in-person. Having the ability to conduct meetings in various manners allows for more flexibility for Council to accommodate differing situations.

We encourage the in-person option with no live-streaming to be used in very limited situations, such as a meeting outside of Council Chambers and/or for ceremonial purposes as noted in the Staff report, since live streaming significantly enhances the public’s ability to participate and to monitor Council and Committee discussions and decisions.

2. Public Delegations

We applaud Director Paroschy’s creative proposal to provide that speaking times for public delegations are based on the speaking topic, rather than when a request to delegate is made.

Items not on the Agenda

When a member of the public is speaking on an item that is not on the Agenda, we support the request to delegate being made at least 7 days before the meeting, and supporting material being submitted at least 5 business days before the meeting. This will provide time for the request and supporting material to be considered and included

in the Agenda. The draft provides a speaking time of 5 minutes. Since this involves new matters without the benefit of information in a Staff report, Council may wish to permit 10 minutes.

### Items on the Agenda

When a member of the public is speaking on an item that is already on the Agenda, we fully support the proposal to have one length of time to speak, regardless of when the request to delegate is made. This will eliminate the uncertainty and confusion that often currently exists with the public as to whether they are allowed to speak for 2 minutes or 5 minutes.

This change also will correct the unfairness of having to request to delegate before the Agenda comes out. It is hard to understand the current requirement that someone who wants 5 minutes to speak has to request to delegate 7 business days before the meeting, which is before they even know if the item will be on the Agenda.

Public delegations are an opportunity for elected officials to hear from their constituents before making a decision. The public often has information not available to staff, as was the case in the recent applications involving Harry Island and Meda Island. And the public's perspectives can be helpful and lead to more informed and well considered decisions.

Over the many years that the MLA has been delegating and witnessing other members of the public delegate, we have learned that 2 minutes is often not enough time to make an effective delegation. At least 20 seconds is taken by providing the speaker's name and address, which leaves insufficient time to make any more than one point of substance. Sometimes only one point needs to be made, and this can easily be done in 2 or less minutes. However, for complex items such as a proposed by-law amendment (such as this) or an official plan amendment, or comments on an application where the speaker has new information that will be relevant to the decision being made, 2 minutes is not enough time.

As a result, we urge Council to permit public delegations to be 5 minutes long in every situation, provided the request to delegate is made at least 24 hours before the meeting. We support the proposed restriction that a speaker not be wasting time by repeating other delegations or comments they've made in the past.

### Process for making requests to delegate

We appreciate that Staff are looking into enhancing the information and process for members of the public to learn about and submit requests to delegate through the Township's website.

### 3. Working Groups

The MLA and FOM support the proposal to amend the procedural by-law to permit Council or a Committee to create ad hoc working groups from time to time. We agree with Mayor Kelley's rationale in his presentation at the June 14th, 2023 General/Finance Committee meeting as to the benefits of working groups over standing committees in situations where a specific question, issue or task is required to be performed within a specific time frame, and where community membership will be an advantage.

This working group model was used successfully in the Minett Official Plan review and the Township's Official Plan review. We believe it is an efficient and streamlined use of Township resources and an opportunity for the Township to benefit from the expertise of its constituents.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Sincerely,



Susan Eplett  
President  
Muskoka Lakes Association



Ken Pearce  
Director  
Friends of Muskoka

Cc: Crystal Paroschy, Director of Legislative Services/Clerk