

November 19, 2020

Dear Chairs and Members of the
Community and Planning Services Committee
and Engineering and Public Works Committee,

Re: Servicing Options for Minett

The Muskoka Lakes Association (MLA) and Friends of Muskoka (FOM) appreciate this opportunity to provide our comments on the water and wastewater servicing option for Minett, and the recommendations made in the Report from Commissioners Hastings and Jahn regarding servicing options dated November 19, 2020 (the "Report").

Both the MLA and FOM have been involved in the Minett file for the past 2 years. We strongly supported the recommendations of the Minett Joint Policy Review Steering Committee (MJPRSC) that density needed to be reduced, that residential land uses should not be permitted on the waterfront and that Minett is not an appropriate location for a settlement area. Hence, we recommended that any further development proceed on Private Communal Services (PCS) as they would be purpose built to serve one resort development.

We appreciate the analysis completed by the District to inform the policy framework and complexities of this decision. We note that the Report does not provide an assessment of the upfront and ongoing cost of Municipal Services (MS), or the financial impact of MS on taxpayers. Before rejecting PCS and requiring MS in Minett, we urge Council to understand and assess the fiscal impact of MS, including all costs to be borne the taxpayers.

While MS may be technically preferred, we continue to support the use of PCS for the following reasons:

- Building MS in Minett will make it very difficult for the District to curtail future growth in this area, especially in light of the Provincial Policy Statement requirement for growth to be directed towards municipally serviced areas. Even if the current District or TML Council imposes limits on growth, Friday Harbour is a sobering example of what future Councils may approve once services are available;
- The Muskoka taxpayers will be supporting yet another municipal plant built expecting development that does not materialize;
- PCS can be designed and operated to the same environmental standards as a municipal plant; and
- Adequate securities and oversight can be built into future development agreements.

We continue to object to the inclusion of residential development in Minett because:

- If residential development is permitted, it will require support services and infrastructure to be built, including improved roads, stores, schools, healthcare and ambulance services, and additional fire safety services. These already exist in other nearby settlement areas, including Port Carling and Bala, and it would be fiscally irresponsible to duplicate them in Minett.
- Recent studies delivered to the District by Altus Group and Hemson Consulting predict limited growth for resort accommodation or residential housing in TML.
- TML does not need another settlement area. There exists more than adequate excess capacity for projected growth in existing municipally serviced settlement areas and resort villages elsewhere in TML and the District. It would not make sense to create yet another set of potentially under-utilized municipal services, or burden taxpayers with the cost of maintaining them.
- Adding significantly to the supply of resort accommodation in the District will create a more competitive environment for the already struggling resorts elsewhere in TML and the District, including those in Huntsville and Gravenhurst.
- Prohibiting residential uses in Minett's waterfront commercial area will address the concerns raised in the Report regarding the risks of residential on PCS. As noted above, this was the recommendation of the MJPRSC after months of study and deliberation.
- Wallace Bay has a history of water quality concerns, as noted in the Report, and a recent boating impact study indicates that the amount of boat traffic already far exceeds safe boating standards. Targeting Minett as an area of residential growth will only serve to exacerbate these water quality and boating concerns.

If a decision is made to approve MS in Minett, we urge Council to include the following important restrictions to help reduce the risk of irresponsible residential growth:

1. The District Official Plan Amendment (OPA) should clearly explain the rationale for approving MS -- not to create another settlement or growth area, but to protect the environment and allow a mixed use area that includes some residential accommodation. Including this rationale in the OPA will help to defend against future expansion in Minett.
2. The OPA must contain clear and restrictive policies on residential development.
3. The MS should be built in phases, appropriately sized for the development in each phase. This will help prevent excess servicing capacity which is expensive to maintain and may encourage additional development.
4. Condominium units should be subject to the conditions recommended by the MJPRSC to ensure that condominium units remain commercial.

5. A maximum of 25% of the units located in the resort-commercial zones should be allowed to be residential units, as provided in the current draft of the Township OPA.
6. The permissible density at the waterfront should be limited as recommended by the MJPRSC in order to protect lake health, natural character and the 'view from the canoe'.

PCS is the option recommended by the MJPRSC established by the District and TML after extensive debate about the future of this area. It also is the option that will prevent Minett from becoming a residential settlement area, which our supporters and members have clearly and consistently opposed.

Thank you for your consideration and we welcome this opportunity to preserve what we all love about Muskoka.

Sincerely,

Muskoka Lakes Association



Deborah Martin-Downs, President

Friends of Muskoka



Laurie Thomson, President

cc: Amy Back, District Clerk
Samantha Hastings, Commissioner of Community and Planning Services
Fred Jahn, Commissioner, Engineering and Public Works