



Welcome to June 2016 NewsBites –

The MLA hopes that all our members have had the opportunity to enjoy the wonderful Muskoka weather Mother Nature provided during the last two weekends in May. ***We thank all those that attended the MLA's Water Quality Volunteer Training and Seedling Day on May 21st. Your support of the MLA's programs is very much appreciated.***

Water Level Task Force - The MLA's Water Level Task Force continues to hold meetings with municipal, provincial and federal government representatives. We continue to work our way into various areas of the Minister of Natural Resources & Forestry's offices to ensure our members concerns are heard. Our focus continues to be on our three point action plan, as previously communicated to members, politicians and the public. The damage survey is now closed with over 1,000 responses indicating material damage to many properties in Muskoka from the April 2016 flood. Our team is working with the District of Muskoka GIS mapping group to produce a series of views of the damage across the lakes; expect more on this as the information is completed. The Task Force also has another series of external communications in development, all supporting the request for implementation of our three point action plan; you can anticipate these coming to you and broadly to the market over the next couple of weeks.

Annual General Meeting - The MLA has also been busy planning our Annual General Meeting (AGM). The AGM will be Friday, July 22nd with doors opening at 6:30 p.m. at the Milford Bay Community Centre. Our guest speaker this year will be Rebecca Webb, Regional Manager, Municipal & Stakeholder Relations speaking about your property's new assessment notices (MPAC) coming out this summer. The MLA feels that Rebecca's insight into MPAC and your new 2016 assessment will be helpful to all our members. ***We hope to see you at our AGM on July 22nd at the Milford Bay Community Centre!***

DISTRICT OF MUSKOKA

District Council Composition – On May 16th, District Council continued discussions on a new composition for District Council. The council is currently composed of 23 councillors plus the District Chair. The 23 councillors are made up of 12 Town representatives (Huntsville, Gravenhurst and Bracebridge) and 10 Township councillors (Township of Muskoka Lakes, Lake of Bays and Georgian Bay). District staff had produced another report to help councillors move forward on this important by-law issue. District Chair John Klinck suggested that further discussion should occur at District's Corporate and Emergency Committee and in doing so, would give councillors time to digest the latest staff report. Chair Klinck said "I've heard both sides of this issue; some want no major changes while others request a full change of council composition. Maybe we hire a consultant to review this regarding a potential approach. I've heard a great number of folks in Muskoka say they are offended at the 50% rating/weighting of the seasonal residents as outlined in the 1969 Paterson Report; on which the current composition of District Council is based. That may not be appropriate in 2016. That needs consideration." TML Councillor Phil Harding stressed the need for terms of reference as per the following:

1. Is the new composition to be based on population or equality amongst the municipalities?
2. What is the appropriate total number of District councillors?
3. Should councillors' remuneration be increased or decreased?
4. How will the election of the District Chair be done in future?

Whatever composition is proposed, four of the six municipalities must agree on the new by-law. The local news story can be found [here](#). ***The MLA is pleased that District Chair John Klinck has highlighted the disproportionate representation of seasonal residents as per the out-dated 1969 Paterson Report. The MLA continues to follow this issue with great interest.***

Proposed Changes to the District of Muskoka's Water Quality Model- Neil Hutchinson, Principal Scientist of Hutchinson Environmental Sciences Ltd. (HESL) has been working with District staff reviewing their current water quality model and suggesting changes. The District will no longer deal with 'over capacity' lakes. Neil advises that the District continue to test for phosphorous initially while starting to incorporate and rely on other planning policies and tools that mitigate phosphorous loading to maintain healthy lakes and rivers. New best practice initiatives include requirements for shoreline buffers, tree preservations, setbacks for septic systems. All these requirements can be implemented through site plan control which could possibly be handled at the lower-tier municipal level.

The lower-tier municipalities will be required to make the necessary changes in their OPs to delete the District's classification of lakes, including lakes over-threshold, and to substitute District's new best practices for water quality. This new water quality model is the thrust of an Official Plan Amendment policy which is expected to be presented to District Council in August 2017. ***The MLA Political & Land Use and Water Quality & Environment committees will be meeting with District staff in July to discuss their new Official Plan policy regarding this new water quality model.***

District in discussions with Porter Airlines re Summer 2017 Flights to Muskoka – Porter Airlines is in preliminary talks to launch a summer service to Muskoka beginning summer 2017. It is hoped that scheduled commercial flights between Toronto and the Muskoka Airport in Gravenhurst will boost tourism and providing a faster alternative to reaching your cottage on a weekend. The idea that the District of Muskoka will pay for any unfilled seats is being debated. According to a June 1st Globe & Mail article, Samantha Hastings, District Commissioner of Planning and Economic Development, said it is unlikely the District would pay for unfilled seats, noting that the new route would have an aggressive marketing campaign "to make sure that we're not in a position where taxpayers are subsidizing empty seats." See the full article [here](#). ***Depending on the final cost to bring this service to Muskoka, which would also entail extensive and expensive upgrades to the current airport, the MLA could be very supportive of this new service to enhance travel options in and out of the region.***

District Road Construction/Closures/ Hydro Line Clearing Schedule – Construction and maintenance work on District Roads typically begins each spring and continues well into the late fall. During this time, it may be necessary to restrict traffic or close roads. The District does its best to keep interruptions to a minimum, especially during our busy tourist season. To view the 2016 work schedule, please see [here](#). ***The MLA recommends our members take a moment to review the work schedule so that you can arrange to work around any holiday plans you may have.***

Have your say regarding Council's Strategic Priorities – Another reminder that District Council is updating its Strategic Priorities and is currently looking for input from Muskoka residents and community groups. Council's Strategic Priorities are used to guide its decision making. Public input is encouraged through a survey on the District's website. The survey closes on June 20th, 2016 after which staff will prepare a report on public and community feedback and recommend approval of the revised Strategic Priorities to Council. The draft priorities and survey can be found [here](#). ***The MLA encourages all residents to fill out the survey to ensure your ideas and thoughts are heard at the District of Muskoka.***

TOWN OF BRACEBRIDGE

Congratulations to Mayor Graydon Smith – Mayor Smith has been a member of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) for several years and has also served as a member of Ontario Small Urban Municipalities (OSUM) for the last two years. Recently, Mayor Smith was elected Vice-Chair of OSUM. OSUM is the voice for Ontario's small urban municipalities while AMO is the voice for municipalities across Ontario. OSUM is an integral part of AMO and has a number of its Board members serving on the AMO Board of Directors. Policy and research activities are undertaken by OSUM through the staff at AMO. Mayor Smith's new Vice-Chair position is a two year term. The local news story can be found [here](#). ***The MLA congratulates Mayor Graydon Smith and wishes him every success in his new position.***

Bracebridge announces Site of New Arena/Recreation Complex – The Goble family of Willen Investments Inc. has generously donated 22 acres of land, located beyond the current end of Salmon Avenue, for the development of a new recreation facility. The replacement of the existing 67-year-old facility has been identified by Council as a priority project in the coming years. After forming a working group of Councillors and staff during the previous term to examine other facilities and work with local stakeholders, a preliminary feasibility plan was completed in late 2014. Included in this plan were a number of potential sites that would be suitable for the project. The parcel of land owned by the Goble's was seen as the best fit for the project even before the possibility of a donation was discussed. With the site now secured, the Town will proceed with the next steps to move the project forward, developing a design and concept plan as well as more detailed pricing which it will use to formulate a funding strategy. The full press release can be found [here](#). ***The MLA applauds those individuals who generously donate parcels of land that benefit all residents.***

A new Outdoor Patio is proposed for Bracebridge's Main Street – The Town of Bracebridge received an application from LIV Muskoka Night Club at 27 Manitoba Street for a 16 person patio on the sidewalk and a temporary sidewalk platform. The sidewalk platform will take up three parking spaces to allow for the movement of pedestrian traffic around the patio. Bracebridge advised they would consider a four year seasonal agreement from April 15th to October 15th. This is the first outdoor patio application that Bracebridge has dealt with. This application was presented at District council and was passed unanimously. ***The MLA is pleased to see downtown Bracebridge being reinvigorated and applauds a cautious approach to an outdoor patio.***

TOWN OF GRAVENHURST

Update re Gravenhurst's new Official Plan (OP) – As previously reported the MLA has met and consulted with several Gravenhurst lake associations on three occasions, reviewed Gravenhurst's ten Discussion Papers and prepared and delivered an MLA PowerPoint presentation, outlining our high level comments, at the Gravenhurst public meeting on April 30th, 2016. The MLA's key principle is 'environment first'. Other key points include: specific policies for different sized lakes, sustainable policies need to be embedded in the OP, updated stormwater management policies to existing areas was encouraged, renewable resource policies need to be established, growth projections need to be re-examined, protection of the environment even in the urban areas, allowing two-storey boathouses on Lake Muskoka with similar restrictive policies as in adjacent Township of Muskoka Lakes, development of a natural heritage system was recommended, source protection plans need to be established and support of new active transportation systems. ***The MLA met with Gravenhurst planning staff on June 7th to continue discussions on this important document.***

New Residential Care Facility approved – On May 24th Planning Council approved the development application for a 121 bedroom Residential Care Facility for seniors to be located to the north of the Wharf steamship area, just below Lookout Park and setback from Muskoka Bay. The developer is proposing to build 45 independent living model suites, 52 assisted living model bedrooms and 24 memory care models. The May 24th meeting was a public meeting to hear the community's comments on this application. This public was quite divided on this development. Although most felt that the proposed use was fine, there were concerns that the building was too large and too tall for the site. Other concerns were insufficient parking available, negative effects of blasting and environmental degradation and that this development was not in keeping with the character of Muskoka Bay. Those in favour of the development were pleased with the employment opportunities and affordable seniors' care that this development would provide. The zoning by-law was passed with a few amendments including a Holding Provision until the applicant has a servicing agreement in place with the District regarding capacity and provision of municipal water and sewer services. This application is expected to be approved at the June District Council meeting. Details of the development can be found [here](#). ***The MLA understands the need for more health care facilities in Muskoka due to its increasing aging population.***

SEGUIN TOWNSHIP

Seguin's 'Environment First' 2016 Initiative – Seguin council believes that “softening your shoreline means improved lake health.” Seguin wants to promote a shift away from clearing shorelines in favour of promoting protection and restoration of natural vegetative shoreline areas. A recent staff report outlines a number of initiatives to increase awareness and to encourage property owners to undertake simple shoreline restoration projects to reduce human impact on lake and river quality. Ways that Seguin Township intends to promote the health of their lakes while not discouraging development or recreation usage include:

1. Expanding the Seguin Stewardship Program - The program is designed to recognize and applaud property owners for making improvements to their environment through stewardship activities. By taking part in the program, residents receive a Stewardship Seguin Flag acknowledging their commitment to sustainable living.
2. 'Stewardship Seguin' speakers series - brings four prominent stewardship practitioners and promoters from around Muskoka to provide vital knowledge and experience for the advancement of environmental practices.
3. Promote 'Stewardship Seguin'- through the Seguin website, Facebook page and Twitter, the Rosseau Market and by informing all Seguin Lake Associations.

For more information on this important initiative, please see Seguin Councillor Jack Hepworth's Council and Community Report dated May 2nd found [here](#). ***The MLA is once again impressed by Seguin Council's commitment to educating the public on ways to respect the value of our shorelines as a way to maintain lake health.***

Seguin Open House re Seguin Water Quality Model – The Township of Seguin has initiated a review of their water quality model and the related Official Plan (OP) policies that manage shoreline development and protects lake water quality. Seguin's OP contains policies based on the sensitivity of lakes and their threshold status to phosphorus. Where lakes are modeled and their threshold status and sensitivity has changed as a result of the updates to the Seguin Water Quality Model, the OP requires that “Appendix I Lake Sensitivity” be updated. The Township's planning consultant, Hutchinson Environmental Sciences Ltd. (HESL) has prepared a background report for public review and comment. The Open House will include a presentation by HESL scientists. **The Open House will take place Saturday, June 11th from 10:30 a.m. to 12 noon at the Humphrey Community Hall, 15 Humphrey Drive, Seguin.**

Joint Municipal Police Force Idea Abandoned- Seguin had partnered with several other municipalities to explore developing a joint municipal police force as an alternative to being subject to the new OPP funding model. The objective was to achieve savings of a minimum of 20%. However, when the province softened the household billing cost and phased in the new surcharges over time, the objective did not meet the 20% savings minimum. This resulted in the initiative being abandoned. ***The MLA applauds Seguin's initiative to 'think outside the box' in order to try to save residents' tax dollars.***

The Rosseau Library remains in the Rosseau Memorial Hall - This hotly debated issue has been settled. Although some of the public wanted to move the library to the basement of the Ruth Dare Health Centre, council voted unanimously to keep the Rosseau Library in the Rosseau Memorial Hall. According to the local news article, about 50 people attended the public consultation meeting in May. Those that addressed council asked that council keep the library where it is and asked that it be incorporated in the upcoming building renovations to meet provincial accessibility law. They argued that this would keep the Wellness Room in the Ruth Dare Health Centre free for existing and future health programs. Rosseau councillor Jack Hepworth, who pushed for public consultation, stated that he was pleased “that individual citizens felt so strongly about the issue that they stepped up, took the initiative and worked towards a solution that fit all.” The full news story can be found [here](#).

TOWNSHIP OF MUSKOKA LAKES (TML)

Update on Cove Marina, Foot's Bay – On April 15th Cove applied to TML to extend their docks at the marina. Council deferred a decision for 2 weeks to allow the owners of the Cove to speak with the neighbouring residents who had concerns regarding the application in hopes that a compromise could be reached. On May 4th a special meeting of council was held to review the Cove's new dock layout and learn if a compromise had been reached with the neighbouring residents. The Cove had agreed to reduce their overall plan by 8 boat slips. Although council passed an amendment for phasing and site plan control, the zoning by-law was ultimately defeated on a 4-4 tie vote. Prior to the meeting Councillor Phil Harding warned the Cove that without applying for a temporary permit, the floating docks that previously moored their island customers would now not be available for summer 2016.

Cove Marina appealed the decision to the OMB so the application starts fresh at the OMB. It is expected that the OMB hearing will not take place for another 6 to 9 months. The Cove has subsequently put an application into TML requesting a separate by-law be drafted allowing a maximum of 169 feet of dock for 2 years only. TML will review this application at the June 17th council meeting. ***The MLA agrees that allowing Cove a temporary by-law to re-instate the floating docks is reasonable.***

2016 Final Tax Rates – On May 13th TML Council voted unanimously to adopt the 2016 final tax rates. TML continues to hold the lowest tax rate among all six municipalities in Muskoka however only 18% of TML taxes go to the township itself. In comparison to the other Muskoka municipalities, TML has the lowest general residential tax rate as illustrated below:

Township of Muskoka Lakes	0.10667%
Lake of Bays	0.16710%
Georgian Bay	0.18929%
Huntsville.....	0.34325%
Gravenhurst.....	0.40921%
Bracebridge.....	0.41740%

The full Treasurer's report can be found [here](#) from page 179 to 187. ***The MLA was surprised to see that 51% of TML property taxes go to the District, with the remaining 31% going to Education and only 18% of taxes going to the Township of Muskoka Lakes itself. Of the 6 municipalities within the District, TML contributes the most taxes to the District. The MLA recommends our members take time to read the Treasurer's report.***

911 Sign Fee Increase – TML currently supplies 911 address blades to residents within the Township at a cost of \$24.00 for the steel blade with reflective numbering, steel post and the associated hardware. This fee was last updated in 2006. The current cost to TML to produce the sign and hardware has increased to \$47.72. In order to recoup their costs, the township is increasing the price from \$24.00 to \$50.00. Director of Public Works Roger Young stated the average cost for a 911 sign in the six Muskoka municipalities is \$60.00, so TML is a bargain.

House next to Township Office moved to new location in Port Carling -The Township of Muskoka Lakes purchased the lot next to the township office several years ago in case there was ever a need to expand the township office. Council recently voted to use that lot to expand the parking in Port Carling. TML issued a request for bids on the house to be either demolished or moved. Greg Knight of Knight Developments was the successful bidder and on June 1st undertook the task of moving the 140 year old house to a new location in Port Carling. Mr. Knight will be renovating the house over the next several months and hopes to have it ready to rent as an affordable housing option by Christmas 2016. The local news story can be found [here](#). ***Added affordable housing in Muskoka is welcome.***

NEWS RE BALA FALLS –

OMB Settlement Reached re Bala Heritage Conservation District – A motion coming out of TML's May 13th Council's closed session meeting stated that TML's solicitor was to be authorized to enter into minutes of settlement in regards to the OMB appeal of the Bala Heritage Conservation District by Swift River Energy Ltd. Council voted unanimously to proceed with this motion. Councillor Sandy Currie asked if the original documents, including all negotiations and council discussion, would be made available to the public. Mayor Don Furniss stated that if the OMB decides that a settlement is agreeable, that the documents could be made available on the TML website for public viewing.

Save the Bala Falls (STBF) meeting – On Saturday, May 21st Save the Bala Falls held a Town Hall meeting at the Bala Community Centre. Over 175 people attended. After Save the Bala Fall's presentation, the group held a question and answer session. The organization continues to believe there are unanswered concerns regarding public safety and a high risk of flooding Lake Muskoka during construction and operation of the proposed power plant. Their PowerPoint presentation can be found [here](#). ***The MLA shares similar concerns of public safety and flooding as the STBF group.***

Note -The opinions and/or views expressed on the SaveTheBalaFalls.com website and its social media platforms, including, but not limited to, the website, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages, represent the thoughts of SaveTheBalaFalls.com, its members and active community, and are not necessarily those of the MLA.

The Kee to Bala's 75th Anniversary Event

On July 16th The Kee to Bala will be hosting a 75th anniversary event on the front lawn of The Kee. Kiosks and special tent attractions will be set up along the street in front of The Kee as well. Plenty of musical entertainment is planned including Canadian rock bands and DJs playing music. The majority of the music will be classic rock and roll. ATMs and portable washrooms will be available.

The event will be broken up into 2 time periods:

- 1. Daytime event from noon to 5 p.m. – This is a family friendly, free event aiming to attract all ages to celebrate The Kee's history, listen to live music, enjoy an ice cream and to visit supporting partner attractions. There will be tours of the venue with music playing inside, live music on the lawn and live-to-air radio broadcasting highlighting Bala and The Kee.***
- 2. Evening event from 8 p.m. to 1:30 a.m. – This is an age 19+ only event. There will be a stage on the front lawn and service bars, food vendors and ticket sales tables.***

Event organizers expect this event will draw more than 2,500 people