



## **Cleveland's House Virtual Open House Facilitated by the Muskoka Lakes Association**

**Monday December 11, 2023**

### **Questions & Answers**

**The following is the MLA's summary of the questions asked by Susan Eplett from the Q&A chat box at the virtual Open House, and Mitch Goldhar's answers. You can listen to the full questions and answers in this [recording](#).**

**Q1:** Can you please confirm when the demolition of the current Cleveland's House will begin? It would be great to see some progress start happening with this exciting development.

**A:** Noone would be more excited for that than me and my colleagues on the line. But the answer is that I don't know. We are not in a position to start. The intention is to stick to everything that we've done together with the MLA and Friends of Muskoka and councils, and many others, and let the new by-laws, regulations and OPA go through. But the reason they're not final and binding is because there's an appeal, and it has to be heard by a tribunal. Unfortunately, the timing of the appeal and decision is unknown. Only when the appeal is heard and there is a decision will we be able to start working. It's possible that the tribunal's decision may trigger changes to what has been approved.

**Q2:** What is your plan for sewage treatment, and how will this affect the surrounding area and lakes?

**A:** One of the things I'm most excited about is the sewage and water treatment. I do feel that it would be appropriate here to have high standards, and I think we would all agree. The intention is to build a sewage plant and water treatment plant to municipal standards here, which will ultimately be turned over to the municipality to be operated. Notwithstanding that the phase one you see here is pretty modest in terms of overall permissions, the intention is that we would do municipal services upfront. They'll be sized for phase one, and others who will be hooking up. If and when there's additional phases, the sewage and water treatment plants would be expanded.

**Q3:** Have you considered the impact on Port Sandfield traffic and whether you will have a bypass for residents to go around the development. This is not just for traffic after the build, but also construction during the build.

**A:** We've done extensive traffic studies for the development, and there will be some traffic generated but it is quite modest. There are fewer units in phase one than in the original Cleveland's House. While any development generates some traffic, it does not come anywhere close to straining the roads like Judhaven and Peninsula Road. We also studied the bridge, and the impacts are negligible. But we are sensitive to it and we'll do everything we can during construction to keep the roads clean and minimize truck traffic at inappropriate times.

**Q4:** A lot of people are wondering about the ownership of the cabins. Are they are going to be condominium, timeshare, or rental for example? What will the ownership be?

**A:** I plan to personally own the cabins and have no intention of selling or time-sharing them. They will just be for rent, with the hope that some people will rent them for long periods of time. In terms of the minimum time period for renting, I don't know yet and am still trying to figure that out. The cabins will have kitchens, and they will be different sizes and shapes. The intention is that you will be self-sufficient, like renting a cottage. At the moment I have no intention of doing any condominiums or selling lots, although you never know in the future. These 48 cabins are definitely not condos or for sale, but just for rent.

**Q5:** Do you expect SWS will remain the marina operator for the long term?

**A:** Did Geordie ask that question? Geordie has done a fantastic job and I think we all recognize that. He's a great guy and I really, really appreciate what he's done long before I even knew him that well and his wife. So we've been very lucky that he's continued to do what he can there. He's done a lot of things through thick and thin. But the fact is that it is a redevelopment, and it's not determined yet who is ultimately going to run the marina. There will be a completely rebuilt marina, both the building and the docks. All the infrastructure around the marina will be rebuilt. The buildings are basically falling down, so there's no salvaging them. It's premature to determine exactly who is going to operate that. Stay tuned for updates a few years from now.

**Q6:** How many boats do you expect this is going add to Lake Rosseau? And do we know the capacity for boats at the marina and at the docks?

**A:** Boats are an important factor. I don't understand why some boats still make as much noise as they do when it seems we've been able to get pretty much every other machine to make less noise. We are increasing the number of slips. There's 125 slips now, and on completion there will be 215 slips, which is permitted under the previous approval. We will probably build them all and will monitor boat traffic. There will be ways we will be able to regulate boat traffic by regulating how many boats are allowed by renters, and reserving spots, for example. I am very sensitive to boats and boat traffic. There's going to be many businesses there, but at the same time there's people living around Cleves so we will be very sensitive to respecting them as well.

**Q7:** Will any staff accommodation be built as part of phase one?

**A:** There will be staff housing with phase one in some of the existing buildings and cabins, once they're in good shape. I anticipate building staff housing from scratch, probably soon after phase one or maybe before phase one ends. I really feel strongly about getting some staff housing there, and having a nice and safe place for everybody who works there. It's badly needed. It's on this plan, on the other side of Judhaven. It's a big priority.

**Q8:** What are your intentions for the sports facilities? Will these be open to the public or on a membership basis to other cottagers on the lake?

**A:** For phase one, there is tennis, pickleball and padel and then indoor squash. For golf, there is already the Rock which is a public course. I haven't decided on whether tennis will be public or private, but am inclined that everyone can book since I'd like it to be available to everybody. It could be a bit of both. I would like there to be a tennis team and then we play against other clubs. The aim is for a really decent standard of club with exhibitions a couple of times a summer where everyone would be able to come. I haven't completely resolved that. I am intending that phase two will have a day camp with additional sports for kids, since they can use all the courts, golf and the land for things like soccer. I think it would be great for parents to have a camp with lots of activities nearby. Maybe people rent cabins and put their kids in camp for a week or two.

**Q9:** What type of impact will the lights from this community have on our now dark sky on Lake Rosseau? Will the lights be turned off at a certain time or redirected to not affect the sky?

**A:** I love the dark sky and go out with the scope whenever it's clear. I hope there will be lots of spots here where people will be able to do that. While safety requires some lighting, the lighting will be subdued. You can be sure that there will be the minimum amount of lighting while also being safe for people who are there. I can assure you that I'm very conscious of that. If anyone has any complaints in the future about lighting, I will be responding to it. We will try to strike the balance here.

**Q10:** What kind of economic impact will this have on Minett and the Township? How many full time 12-month positions do you plan to offer? As you know, there is a great deal of poverty in Muskoka lakes and high food bank usage.

**A:** We will not be a complete solution to the region's economic issues, but I think our project will be positive. There will be a lot of construction jobs, and the intention is that we'll be doing that locally and using local materials. I can't tell you how many businesses will be open year round. I think it's going to be partly up to all of us and how often we go up there. I don't intend on winterizing all the cabins, but I think there will be some cabins that are winterized. I hope more and more people will go there in the off seasons and this will create more jobs. The more successful it is, the more jobs will be created.

**Q11:** Are there any plans for seizing the opportunity to utilize sustainable and eco-friendly products in the building finishes, grounds, energy generation, etc.?

**A:** Yes, the intention is to use a lot of wood in both the cabins and the village, and to be close to net zero. I don't see it being possible to be net zero, but it's definitely going to be top of mind in terms of the lowest impact possible. It's very much the theme here, including geothermal and the mechanical and electrical systems.

**Q12:** Given your commitment to protect the environment, do you plan to do any shoreline naturalization?

**A:** We have engaged a consultant for the shoreline, and are still working through that. We will be building near the shoreline and will have a boardwalk system there. We don't have current plans for planting and naturalizing the shoreline, but are very sensitive to the overall environment here and the impact. We'll be planting enormous amounts of trees here, because I would like these cabins ultimately to be in a bit of a forest environment. There will be the beach where it is now, and a dark sky lighting system.

**Q13:** We understand from the Saturday meeting that this vision does not see a future in the historic hotel and boathouse/dance hall. It saddens many of us to lose this culturally significant landmark. We understand these buildings are currently in a dilapidated state and not as attractive as they could be. The demolition of this last remaining grand hotel would be a great cultural loss to the area. We feel the community and Muskoka would love you to reconsider saving the older historic sections while adapting them to modern day use.

**A:** It is not my intention, even though I love it too. It doesn't work. The buildings are basically dilapidated in everything from top to bottom. The fact is that it is not the original building. The original buildings have been completely rebuilt. There is an aesthetic but the vast majority of those buildings have been rebuilt over time. For example, the exterior of those buildings is plastic, not original, and the windows are not original. I've looked at it but it's actually unsafe to use and would be enormously expensive and

almost impractical, if not close to impossible. So it's not going to be part of the development. But there will be some references to the building in the new development. It's the intention to do something with some of the architecture to salute and honor the original iconic shape of some of the original building. I hope that we'll all be able to accept that as the reality of this situation. And I hope we'll all be able to recognize what that salute is and appreciate it.

**Q14:** Please explain the purpose of the tower behind Abby's Bakery and the marina.

**A:** The tower is meant to be an iconic beacon, anchoring that there's a settlement here. A lot of communities have done something that shows pride and adds some interest and scale. In this case, with a little waterfront village, I think it will look cool, create some gravitas and something interesting for people to gather around. The light on the top will be quite natural, just a dim light in the distance. At the ground level, there might be a fire pit or fireplace. I think that would be pretty cool and very nice for all of us to be able to gather and hang out there.

**Q15:** Is there a plan to build a hotel at some point?

**A:** Yes, that's one thing I can say definitively about phase two that, at the moment, I definitely do intend to build a hotel there. I would have done it in phase one, but with all the infrastructure and issues with water and sewage treatment, planning, architecture and marina, it was just too much to do all at once. I don't want to be held to this, but at the moment I'm picturing a boutique kind of hotel, maybe a little bit on the upper scale, and around where the original Cleves building is now. I'm thinking 50 to 100 rooms, but we'll see what an operator would want to do here.

**Q16:** As an existing boat slip renter who depends on the marina for island access, are you guaranteeing continuing access? Will we be able to access docks with our cars to drop off personal belongings?

**A:** While I would not use the word "guarantee", it is definitely the intention to continue to make the docking system here available to islanders. Islanders have nothing to worry about. It's great to have the islanders use Minett and we would never shut them out. It would be completely at odds with everything that we're doing. There's logistics involved and timing, and it's going to be a huge mess there for a while. I haven't completely figured out how we're going to keep them going during construction, but will try. We'll keep you posted. But once it's all done, you can have a high degree of confidence that, if you've been using Minett as your launching point, you'll be able to continue using it as a launching point in the future.

**Q17:** What is the ownership of this project? Is it Penguin, another corporation, or you personally? And what is the long term vision for the ownership or control of the development?

**A:** I own it privately, and do not have any partners. I'm part of a public company called Smartcentres, but that has absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with Clevelands House. Penguin Group of Companies is my own private business that I use for a number of properties that I own privately.

**Q18:** Would you consider auctioning or selling off some of the artifacts from the old Clevelands House to support local charities? I believe there would be great interest and this would be an amazing thing to do.

**A:** That's a great idea. We'll look at it. I don't really know how much is original, as I said before. There may be some old beams. But we'll look at it if there's something worthwhile. Great, great suggestion.

**Q19:** Are there plans for increasing the emergency services in Minett?

**A:** As I get older, I think it would be great if we had more medical and dental closer to a lot of us, certainly in peak season. And a veterinarian for that matter. I'm hoping that some of the tenants will be medical, dental, and maybe veterinarian. We're in discussions with some people to do wellness there. I also hope we'll have a physio in peak season. There's a fire hall across the road, and we don't have plans to build ambulance facilities. Phase one is not that big, so would not justify or warrant adding ambulatory service.

**Q20:** Developers sometimes build phase one and possibly phase two, and then sell the project knowing that there are still approvals for many more units. What is your take on your long-term vision and commitment to the project?

**A:** I'm a bit of a long term kind of person. My history in business is that I develop things to hold them. I still own the first property I developed. If you're driving up from Toronto, you could drive by the property near Barrie that was opened in 1994. I'm not a big seller, I guess. I have no current plans to sell the property or to sell parts of the property. There may be some scenarios in the future, but that's not my plan or my sort of history. If it's beneficial to sell, I might do that. For example if it was warranted to have a seniors facility here maybe I would sell a piece of land to somebody to do that. I would put regulations governing the property and additional restrictions to make sure it was very cohesive and in the spirit of the place. On this master plan, there's a subdivision off Peninsula Road, for a future phase. Those are intended to be houses for locals that might want to buy a new house in the future, and those would be sold. But I wouldn't expect Clevelands House to be any different than the developments that I've owned for many many decades all over the country.

**Q21:** Are the condominiums shown on the site plan part of a future phase?

**A:** Yes, somebody has keen eyes. We put that on there to make sure that everybody understands that's a possibility. It's not part of phase one, and it's not the current intention. It's up on the hill behind the marina. It's there to communicate it's a permitted use here, even though it's not the intention. I don't have any plans to do any kind of condos here, so it's really just a placeholder among a lot of other things for future phases. So it's full disclosure, transparency, open kimono, that these are all the uses that are permitted here. Phase one is what is going to happen. The rest of it is to be determined.

**Q22:** Will each rental cabin have permission to have a boat and launch?

**A:** Absolutely not. A canoe, yes. But we have to figure it out. I do not support and do not want to see that. I think not more than 10% of our slips can be for the people living in those cabins or residences. So technically we could probably only provide 21 boats for the 48 cabins. But people will be fine without having their own designated motorboat.

**Q23:** Where do you plan to build the sewage treatment plant?

**A:** It will be where the lagoons are. If you refer to this plan, the two lake-like features on the left are the lagoons where the sewage has gone forever on this property. From the Cleveland House property point of view, our water and sewage will be going into municipal services and treatment plant somewhere over by the lagoons.

**Q24:** The water quality in Wallace Bay is historically among the poorest on Lake Rosseau. What is being done to ensure that this is not exacerbated by the new development?

**A:** Municipal water and sewage services is the highest standard for treating water and sewage, and we don't have that there now. The Western world's system technology for treating water and sewage that ultimately ends up back in our ecosystem is the highest that we can have wherever we are, and is what we're going to have up here. It can't get any better than that. Hopefully that will contribute to improving the water quality here.

**Q25:** Do you have any final comments?

**A:** I'm hoping to get this development going at some point soon. I hope we'll all be able to enjoy it. And hopefully, we will have found the balance here. We appreciate everybody's input and are open to continued feedback from everyone. We're in this one together. As a cottager up here, I'm no different than everybody else and so appreciate everyone's feedback.

**Closing Comments from Susan Eplett:**

Thank you, Mitch. Thank you, Paula, for your comments as well. It's really great for you to explain your plans and answer so many questions. I think our community is really fortunate that you're taking this time to be so transparent and engage with us about these plans to develop a property that holds a very special place in the hearts and memories of so many of us.

Please watch your inbox later this week for a copy of the recording of this presentation, as well as the renderings and questions and answers. Enjoy the rest of your evening, and my very best wishes for very happy holidays for you and your families.