

Welcome to the August 2017 issue of MLA NewsBites –



As the summer draws to a close, the MLA thanks all those who came out to participate in the MLA's Aquatic Regatta, Sailing Regatta and our summer seminars. We hope you enjoyed all of our summer events (despite the poor weather!).

Please help support our annual **Food Drive**. See details at the bottom of page 4.

We would like to remind all our seasonal residents to take a few minutes to complete the **District's Second Home Study on-line survey**. The survey provides an opportunity for the District of Muskoka to receive input regarding seasonal residents' spending habits, needs and concerns. The information will also influence the future composition of District Council. ***The survey is open only until August 31st. The MLA strongly encourages you to participate. Have a say in the future of Muskoka.*** [CLICK for Survey](#)

DISTRICT OF MUSKOKA –IMPORTANT AND TIME SENSITIVE!

District's Proposed new Resort Policies – As reported in previous issues of NewsBites, the District is reviewing its current Official Plan and has proposed several changes. The MLA is particularly concerned with the proposed resort policies that would allow increased flexibility for resort developers, including the controversial proposal to allow up to 50% of a unit's resort to be deemed "residential." The MLA is concerned this will lead to high-density housing projects on the Muskoka waterfront. The MLA has attended both District public meetings this summer. In addition the MLA has met separately with District staff to provide further input on the resort policies. ***The MLA strongly encourages you to join us in attending the District's Tuesday, August 29th public meeting in Bracebridge to voice your opinions. The meeting will be held from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Rotary Club, 131 Wellington Street in Bracebridge. The MLA will be making a presentation. District staff has indicated there will be one last final public meeting this fall, at a date yet to be determined. We hope you will attend the August 29th meeting to add your comments on this important document.***

Members Selected for District Council Composition Review Committee– As of January 1st, 2018 all Ontario municipalities are required to review their council's composition within their first two years of office. At its July meeting, District council voted to seek a consultant to undertake this. Council also voted to establish an ad-hoc committee to work with the consultant and District staff. On August 21st District Council voted to appoint the following councillors to the Council Composition Review Committee: Scott Aitchison (Huntsville), Peter Cooper (Georgian Bay), Lori Giaschi-Pacini (Bracebridge), Paul Kelly (Gravenhurst), Phil Harding (Township of Muskoka Lakes), Bob Young (Lake of Bays) and District Chair John Klinck. Karin Terziano (Huntsville) was appointed as a temporary member in case Scott Aitchison is unable to attend. These appointments take effect immediately. ***The MLA will continue to keep you apprised of any recommendations from this new committee.***

TOWN OF BRACEBRIDGE

Mayor Graydon Smith Pushes for Northern Funding Status – Mayor Smith spoke with the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs about provincial development funding at a recent Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) conference. Over the last four years Muskoka has accessed funds from the Eastern Ontario Fund, but its tools to encourage development are more limited than those in the Northern Ontario Fund. According to a local news article, Mayor Smith stated "I think we've had two successful applications in four years, so we've waited a reasonable amount of time to give some feedback. The program needs to be changed or enhanced or improved to include more of the suite of tools that you'd find in the

Northern Ontario Fund.” The article notes that the northern Ontario fund allows for more one-off projects and start ups appealing to different sectors, whereas the eastern Ontario fund bolsters pre-existing businesses. The full news story can be found [here](#). ***The MLA supports Mayor Smith in his efforts to have Muskoka better recognized as part of Northern Ontario, so that more appropriate funding can be made available.***

TOWN OF GRAVENHURST

Council Approves Heritage Designation of the Narrows Lighthouse – In 2006, the Canadian Coast Guard announced that the lighthouse at the narrows on Muskoka Bay would be replaced – with a plain beacon. Gravenhurst’s Heritage Committee asked that the new structure preserve the historic lighthouse look. At the August 22nd Gravenhurst council meeting, it was announced that the Coast Guard has agreed to building a similar structure, but without the catwalk (for safety reasons). The lighthouse will remain on the municipality’s Heritage Register. ***The MLA congratulates the Town Council and its Heritage Committee on their efforts to support this iconic landmark.***

SEGUIN TOWNSHIP

Waterfront Design Guidelines Workshop – On Saturday August 26th, Seguin Township held an open house to receive public comment on their new Waterfront Design Guidelines. Seguin Township’s shorelines include exposed bedrock, coniferous and deciduous vegetation where the natural environment dominates. Buildings along the shoreline are constructed in such a way to limit the removal of vegetation and to preserve significant landscape features. Shoreline development must maintain the existing natural features so that up to 90% of the front 20 metres of a lot be maintained in a natural vegetative state. Any development application in shoreline areas will now require site plan approval. All development applications will be evaluated in regards to how it complies with Seguin’s waterfront design guidelines.

Seguin has hired Beacon Environmental to prepare a handy booklet which outlines waterfront guidelines that encourage the creation of a sustainable waterfront. Included in the handbook is a list of plants, shrubs and trees that are native to the area. Seguin is looking for feedback on these new design guidelines. For a copy of the draft of this new booklet please contact Hailey Ward; email hward@seguin.ca . The public are encouraged to send comments by September 8th, 2017. ***The MLA attended the meeting on August 26th and continues to be impressed with Seguin’s efforts to strive for sustainable waterfront development. The MLA strongly supports Seguin’s “Environment First” philosophy of “The environment (natural, social, visual) will be given priority over economic or social development when making all land use and public works decisions.”***

TOWNSHIP OF MUSKOKA LAKES (TML)

Township Requesting Community Input on Service Levels & Council Composition –On August 17th TML councillors heard suggestions and comments from the public regarding which township services they value and hope will be retained in the 2018 budget. The majority of those who spoke felt that the community centres and fire halls were important to retain. Some new suggestions to increase revenue, versus cutting services, included taxing out-of-country property owners at a higher tax rate, and selling or leasing shore road allowances to property owners. Only one person agreed with the Mayor’s proposal to reduce the number of councillors. To have your say, fill out the township’s online survey before September 29th. [CLICK for Survey](#).

(Paper copies are available at the Township Office in Port Carling.)

The MLA stresses the importance of providing feedback to the Mayor and councillors on these important issues. The input you provide will form the basis for some tough decisions for the 2018 budget.

Presentation on Dark Sky By-law re Torrance Barrens – The Torrance Barrens was designated a Conservation Reserve in 1997 as a result of a grassroots community effort to have it legally protected. Today the Barrens is also designated a Dark Sky Reserve, one of the few places where you can see the stars and constellations the way our remotest ancestors did. MLA strongly believes it is important to protect this area from urban light pollution. Torrance Barrens straddles the Town of Gravenhurst and the Township of Muskoka Lakes.

A presentation was made to TML council in August about its Dark Sky by-law. TML was commended for its enforcement mindset and was encouraged to work with Gravenhurst in this regard. Mayor and council thanked Mr. Silver for his work helping to preserve the Barren and the Mayor promised to address District Public Works committee on this issue in September. TML also volunteered to create a committee to help maintain the dark sky reserve. ***The MLA appreciates the efforts of all concerned in preserving such a special and unique area.***

Leonard Lake Association requests re Lake Health – Representatives from the Leonard Lake Association are concerned with proposed lake-health policies in the District of Muskoka's Official Plan, which they believe will not protect their lake. In particular, they oppose the District's proposal to rely solely on phosphorous levels as a key measure of water quality. As a result, the association is trying to develop its own process for determining lake health, one which could be applied to other lake communities. The association has hired water quality specialists to do water testing in Leonard Lake, as well as a professional planner to help develop a Lake Capacity Study.

In August, the association delegated to TML council requesting that TML staff work with them to develop a flexible lake-water quality plan that could become part of the township's policy framework. TML council showed little interest in the proposal, with one councillor saying that the township lacks expertise in this area. However, council did promise to have its staff inspect Leonard Lake septic systems in the near future. ***The MLA shares Leonard Lake's concerns with the District's proposed policies surrounding lake health. We are disappointed that TML council showed little interest in working with this creative alternative.***

Council votes to institute Heritage Tax Relief Program – TML's Heritage Committee has recommended TML establish a Heritage Tax Relief program. This program would give partial property tax relief to the owners of designated heritage properties, and hopefully encourage more heritage conservation. The Committee recommended rebate amounts of 40%, the maximum amount permitted. The application form would be available on the Township website for those who wish to designate their properties. Applicants would have to provide details on how their property meets the criteria for designation under the Ontario Heritage Act. An application fee of \$100 was proposed. Councillors voted unanimously to recommend this to TML council in September. ***The MLA is supportive of efforts to preserve Muskoka's history for future generations.***

UPDATE ON BALA FALLS

District Council Grants Swift River Energy Ltd. (SREL) Entrance Permits – On August 23rd District Public Works announced that Swift River Energy Ltd. (SREL) has now submitted all documents required to obtain 'Roadway Entrance' and 'Road Occupancy' permits for its North Bala Falls Hydro Project. SREL is now permitted to begin construction. Both District Chair John Klinck and Public Works Committee Chair Phil Harding expressed their dislike of the project but stated that the District has no authority to stop it. Engineering and Public Works Commissioner Fred Jahn walked attendees through a detailed staff report which outlined how stringent District staff have been in their conditions for permit approval. Mr. Jahn stated that if at any time the District feels its infrastructure is in jeopardy the entrance permits can be revoked. The District staff report can be found [HERE](#):

Mitchell Shnier of the Save the Bala Falls organization and concerned citizen Peggy Peterson both delegated regarding their outstanding concerns re public safety, protection of Moon River water quality, and protection of species at risk. Mr. Shnier has requested copies of SREL's technical reports, detailed drawings and copy of the

Letter of Credit. District councillor Ruth Nishikawa, who represents the Bala area, asked several questions of the District staff regarding public safety and pedestrian walkways.

District Chair John Klinck concluded the meeting by complimenting Chair Harding on his handling of this controversial matter. He regretted that this issue has caused so much discord in Bala and Muskoka. He concluded by saying: "Provincial policy should not be allowed to disrupt communities and the District of Muskoka."

The District has encouraged SREL to host public information sessions to provide construction plans details and answer questions from the community. SREL's Frank Belerique stated that SREL would be on-site Monday, August 28th to begin construction. There will be no lane closures in Bala until after the Cranberry Festival. Construction is estimated to last 18 months.

A local news article can be found [HERE](#):

The MLA has long opposed the construction of this hydroelectric plant. We appreciate the extra efforts by the District to ensure that District infrastructure will be protected. We regret that this project has divided the Bala community. We commend the efforts of those who have worked responsibly to oppose this project, for their commitment to preserving one of Muskoka's best-loved features.

Concert to Celebrate Bala Falls

Saturday, September 16th, 2017 from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Bala Arena

This concert is intended to bring the community together.

Everyone is invited to come and enjoy the music of

'Chris Collins & Boulder Canyon'

(John Denver tribute band)

Doors open at 6 p.m.

Full bar and refreshments available

Tickets are \$20 per person

Tickets can be ordered online at Eventbrite.com or at the door

MLA's Annual Food Drive

It's our 5th annual Food Drive!

As the summer winds down and you clear out your cottage pantry, we hope you can donate what you can to the food drive.

This year's recipient will be the Manna Food Bank – just in time for Thanksgiving!

Thanks to all!

For more information and drop-off locations, please [CLICK LINK](#)