



### **RESORT ISSUE TAKES A PAUSE**

Much has occurred regarding the resort issue since we last reported in our December issue of NewsBites. Touchstone resort's recent phase of development has been appealed to the OMB by a concerned taxpayer. The Villas of Lake Muskoka lawyers have appealed their development application to the OMB. That OMB hearing will commence on April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2018. Legacy Cottages has submitted their condominium application for approval to the District. The conditions of approval for all three condominium applications are similar. In January the OMB heard a motion to dismiss the Mist/Touchstone appeal and while the OMB's decision has not been made there were many people in the audience, including all three development lawyers, watching these proceedings. More information on each of these three individual resort development applications can be found in the Township of Muskoka Lakes section below.

The MLA is not only working with other organizations requesting that resort units be commercial use year round, but is also tackling the District's Official Plan. This plan is the over-arching policy document that provides direction to the lower-tier municipalities in Muskoka on resort development. We are working hard to have input into these policies that would see Muskoka's waterfront saved from densely developed resorts; which have been marketed as wholly owned residential cottages.

The MLA has initiated meetings with District staff and the Friends of Muskoka to discuss current and proposed policies in the District's new Official Plan. The MLA appreciates the opportunity to sit down with District planners to have an open dialogue. After District staff meet with us and others they will be drafting a third version of the District Official Plan. The MLA will keep you apprised of any pertinent developments, but for now the District and Township of Muskoka Lakes have taken a pause.

### **DISTRICT OF MUSKOKA**

**District Council votes to increase District Councillor and District Chair Compensation** – All municipal councils have a responsibility to periodically review the remuneration provided to their members. At the January 15<sup>th</sup> council meeting, councillors received a staff report outlining current remuneration practices at 25 municipalities in Ontario. It was clear from the report that current District councillors and the District Chair's compensation was far below the provincial average. Staff also noted that effective January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019, the existing 1/3<sup>rd</sup> tax-free provision that all municipal politicians enjoy will be eliminated; ultimately reducing their net pay. To maintain the equivalent net pay, an increase in remuneration would be required.

After over an hour's debate, council voted unanimously to increase District Councillor compensation by \$1,000 each year beginning December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018 to December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021. Thus District councillor compensation will increase from \$16,750 in 2017 to \$20,750 by December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021. The District councillors would also be compensated by their area municipalities for their role in local municipal councils.

The District Chair is currently paid \$67,350 plus a car allowance of \$7,200. To bring Muskoka's District Chair in better alignment with other area's comparable positions, District staff recommended incorporating the \$7,200 car allowance into the Chair's base salary with the compensation for mileage based on exact mileage. Council voted unanimously to approve the District's Chair's new base salary as \$74,550 plus mileage. Council then voted unanimously to increase the District Chair's compensation by \$3,000 each year beginning December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018.

The District Chair's compensation will increase from \$74,550 in 2017 (current \$67,350 plus \$7,200 car allowance) to \$86,550 by December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021.

The staff background report can be found [here](#):

***The MLA agrees that appropriate compensation will help attract more election candidates running for public office.***

### **TOWN OF BRACEBRIDGE**

**Mayor Graydon Smith informs the Province of Bracebridge's Financial Concerns** – On January 16<sup>th</sup> Mayor Smith presented Bracebridge's infrastructure and hospital funding concerns to the province's Finance and Economic Affairs standing committee. The province is currently holding pre-budget public hearing across the province. According to a recent news article, Mayor Smith stated "Through our long-term capital planning and asset management process, the Town of Bracebridge has identified the need for over \$89 million in capital (infrastructure) expenditures over the next decade." The Mayor also spoke about the issues of sustainable funding for Ontario's smaller hospitals, particularly small hospitals with multiple sites, and the expanding role of municipalities in health-care-related issues. Bracebridge plans to continue conversations at the upcoming Rural Ontario Municipal Association conference. The full news story can be found [here](#):

***Kudos to Mayor Smith for continuing to champion Muskoka at the provincial level and to keep Muskoka's ever-growing infrastructure needs on their radar.***

**Bracebridge Receives Transit Funding** – Bracebridge Mayor Graydon Smith has announced that the Town has approved funding in excess of \$131,000 to help improve Bracebridge's current public transit. The Government of Canada is providing up to \$50,000 through the Public Transit Infrastructure Fund. The Town will be providing the remainder of the money. The funding will be used to install bus stop pads, benches, bus lay-bys and shelters. The full news story can be found [here](#):

***The MLA congratulates the town on their funding for this important endeavor. This boost to transit will continue to help the ever-increasing senior population access downtown services.***

### **TOWN OF GRAVENHURST**

**Dates for Gravenhurst's 2018 Operating Budget** – The 2018 Town of Gravenhurst Capital Budget was approved Dec 19, 2017. The 2018 Operating Budget schedule is as follows:

**February 16, 2018** - Table 2018 Operating Budget

**March 3, 5, 6 & 7, 2018** - Council Review of 2018 Operating Budget

**March 7, 2018** – Anticipated Council Approval of 2018 Operating Budget

**All public meetings will be held in Council Chambers, 3-5 Pineridge Gate, Gravenhurst.**

\*Full Agendas can be found [here](#): when made available Online.

***The MLA encourages all taxpayers to attend these meetings and take time to provide the Town with your comments.***

**Increased Fibre Optics comes to Gravenhurst** – A joint effort between the Town of Gravenhurst and Lakeland Networks (a division of Lakeland Energy Ltd.) will result in a 20 kilometer expansion of fibre optic infrastructure for the town in 2018. Lakeland Networks plans to connect 1,300 homes and businesses by this fall. Unfortunately not all of Gravenhurst will have the ability to connect this year, but Lakeland hopes to extend service to the rest of the town by 2019. The full news story can be found [here](#):

***This is exciting news for the town as this can help expand home-businesses and attract new businesses and residents to the area.***

**Gravenhurst Opera House's Renovations are complete** – The Opera House has just undergone some much-needed renovations. Improvements to the historic building include improved brick work, concrete restoration throughout, upgraded railings inside and out, improved entranceway, new windows as well as updating the dressing rooms. The total cost of the renovation was \$121,000 and was a joint effort between the municipal and federal governments. Each level of government contributed 50% of the funding for the renovation. The local news story can be found [here](#):

***It's important to maintain our iconic heritage buildings throughout Muskoka. The MLA congratulates the Town on taking steps to preserve this downtown landmark and in attaining federal funding for half of the renovation costs.***

### **SEGUIN TOWNSHIP**

**Councillor Jack Hepworth's January 15<sup>th</sup> Report** – Councillor Hepworth has provided details extracted from Seguin's 2018 Preliminary Budget, Strategic Plan and Community Development Plans. Of special note are Seguin's key principles; one which is a target maximum 2% tax rate increase for 2018. Seguin continues to operate without any debt or deficit. In fact the township is projecting a \$300,745 2017 surplus, of which it is anticipated that \$200,745 will be transferred into the 2018 Reserves. The remaining \$100,000 will be carried into the 2018 Operating Budget. Even more impressive is the CFO/Treasurer's forecast of a maximum 2% Tax Rate increase per year for the next 5 years (2018-2022) and that all reserve changes in that time period are expected to be positive.

For all the details, please see Councillor Hepworth's report [here](#):

***The MLA continues to be impressed with Seguin Township's dedication to responsible budgeting and looks forward to their final 2018 budget report.***

### **TOWNSHIP OF MUSKOKA LAKES (TML)**

**TML Council votes Unanimously to Request the District to Review the Resort Village of Minett Policies in District's Official Plan** - At the January 12<sup>th</sup> council meeting, several delegates spoke urging council to request that the District review the policies for the Resort Village of Minett as part of their overall review of their Official Plan. The delegates spoke of changes in the Planning Act and the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) since this development was first approved. The Planning Act requires that Official plans must be reviewed every 10 years. When the Minett policies were first developed they complied with the 2005 Provincial Policy Statement (PPS). Delegates requested that these policies now be reviewed for compliance under the new 2014 PPS. One delegate made it very clear that the residents of Minett were never in favour of Minett's Resort Village development. The Friends of Muskoka legal counsel spoke of concerns about new regulations and about the concerns of the promised treatment plant that has not yet been built.

District's Director of Planning Summer Valentine attended the meeting and stated that although District staff has not made any changes to the Minett policies and that the District is still receiving public input and that the policies can be reviewed. Mr. Greg Knight on behalf of the applicant Ken Fowler Enterprises (KFE) stated that KFE had submitted a rezoning application to TML last February and stated that the application must be reviewed based on the current Official Plan policies. TML councillors voted unanimously in favour of requesting the District review the Resort Village of Minett development.

A local news story on this issue can be found [here](#):

***The MLA agrees that the District policies for Minett Village need to be reviewed against the current PPS.***

**Update on the Status of the Villas of Lake Muskoka Condominium Agreement** – The Villas property owner submitted a condominium agreement for TML review last September 2017. Council deferred it. Council then reviewed it again in November 2017 and deferred it again. The second deferral was in order to receive a legal opinion in response to a submission made by legal counsel for the MLA. Both the MLA and the Friends of Muskoka requested that TML provide them with a copy of TML’s legal opinion in respect to the MLA’s legal letter. Committee agreed to speak with their legal counsel to ensure this letter can be legally shared. Meanwhile the owner’s lawyer has appealed to the OMB the District of Muskoka’s draft approval of a condominium including the condition that TML enter into an agreement with them. Committee heard from four delegates who outlined their opposition to the Villas development. Their issues included increased density and boat traffic, a lack of typical on-site commercial resort amenities (pool, restaurant, etc.) and limited number of weeks the units were made available to the travelling public. One delegate expressed concern that the Villas appeared to be marketed as wholly owned residential cottages.

This matter will now be debated at the OMB. The OMB hearing will commence April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2018 at the District of Muskoka offices in Bracebridge. TML has formally requested Party status at the OMB.

***The MLA looks forward to the OMB hearing.***

**TML Defers Comment on Legacy Cottages in the Resort Village of Minett**–The District has received an application for condominium approval for 43 housekeeping units. The Township was asked to provide their comments on this application. Legacy Cottages is proposed to be built in 3 phases, as follows:

Phase 1 –15 units in the central area of the site and includes the septic area, parking area, servicing and garbage areas.

Phase 2 – 11 units on the waterfront and includes the outdoor fireplace/pit. It excludes any docks and boathouses.

Phase 3 – 17 units at the rear of the property and includes the gazebo.

Phasing plan and site plan can be found [here](#):

Staff recommended that:

- (1) That a satisfactory Condominium Agreement with the Township of Muskoka Lakes is entered into which includes provisions related to the maintenance of commercial use;
- (2) That the management building be moved to Phase 1;
- (3) That the plan showing architectural floor plans and elevations be amended to state that the proposed units are for resort commercial accommodation use; and,
- (4) That the exclusive use areas be reduced to coincide with each individual resort unit building boundary.

Five delegations were heard. The developer’s planner requested that committee approve the condominium agreement with the details to be debated at a later date. The other four delegates expressed concerns that the resort be available to the travelling public for the entire year as a commercial property; that the on-site management be in Phase 1 of the resort; concerns regarding the clear cutting of the site; and lack of on-site amenities. Additionally, a request for deferral was heard. After much discussion, committee voted unanimously to defer comment on the application.

The staff report can be found [here](#):

***The MLA is pleased with a deferral which will allow the similar issues of Mist/Touchstone to be debated prior to final comments on the Legacy application.***

**TML introduces the Proposed 2018 Budget** – On January 24<sup>th</sup> TML council initiated discussion on its 2018 draft Budget. The meeting lasted for close to 8 hours, but due to some lengthy discussions only the Operating Budget was addressed. The Capital Budget will be discussed on February 8<sup>th</sup>. Topics of discussion on the Operating Budget included:

- **The Fire Department's Budget** - has increased significantly over the last few years.  
*Result:* councillors voted 5 to 4 to direct the Fire Chief to bring back a revised/reduced budget.
- **The Park's Reserve Funds** – Parkland Reserves are to be used for capital projects and not operating costs as has been done in the past.  
*Result:* Councillors voted 7 to 3 to return \$299,000 from the Parks Operating Budget to the Capital Budget. Further discussion is needed to address this \$299,000 operating budget shortfall.
- **The Port Carling Health Hub** – TML is currently responsible for all basic operating costs associated with maintenance of the building and grounds. Some councillors felt that the taxpayers should not be paying for this while others felt that benefit of having the Health Hub outweighed the cost.  
*Result:* No change to the \$30,000 dedicated to the Health Hub.
- **The Community Economic Development Budget** – Discussion of whether TML should fund operational aspects of the Chamber of Commerce, Muskoka Lakes Museum, etc. *Result:* \$20,000 dedicated to the Chamber of Commerce left in the budget for further discussion.
- **The Planning Department's Budget** – A reallocation of \$85,000 'Consultant Fees' is now broken down into \$25,000 'Consultant Fees' and \$60,000 'OMB Consultant Fees'

Budget Overview can be found [here](#):

Operating Budget details can be found [here](#):

Capital Budget details can be found [here](#):

***The MLA encourages TML taxpayers to attend the Thursday, February 1<sup>st</sup> budget meeting in Port Carling's council chambers. This is your opportunity to voice your concerns, suggestions and provide important feedback for council.***

**Thursday, February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018** – Special Council meeting at 7 p.m. to receive public input on the 2018 Budget

**Thursday, February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2018** – Special Committee of the Whole meeting at 9 a.m. for Budget deliberations

**Friday, February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2018** – Regular Council meeting at 9 a.m. for adoption of the 2018 Budget

**Council Defers Decision for a New Seasonal LCBO Outlet at Peninsula Road** – Council recently reviewed an application for a temporary seasonal LCBO retail trailer to be located at the corner of Peninsula Road and Hwy. 118 in Port Carling. Having a second LCBO location is proposed to help ease the congestion associated with the downtown Port Carling store. If permitted, the 930 square foot trailer would be only operated from May to October for up to three years. The trailer is to be located beside the existing marine storage building and the Port Carling Emergency Medical Services (EMS). Concerns were raised about how this would impact EMS operations. TML Council agreed with the District that a decision should be deferred until after a traffic study assessment is completed and that District Public Works is satisfied that this operation will not interfere with existing businesses.

***The MLA is pleased that the District will be reviewing the traffic implications thoroughly as the corner of Peninsula Road is a major intersection in Port Carling.***

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**Muskoka Winter Carnivals**

***Muskoka invites you to come north and join in the fun at one of their many winter carnivals!***

***Port Carling Winterfest – February 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup>***

***Port Sydney Winter Carnival – February 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup>***

***Dwight Winter Carnival – February 9<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup>***

***Baysville Winterfest – February 19<sup>th</sup>***

***Gravenhurst Winter Carnival – February 15<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup>***

***Dorset Snowball Winter Carnival – February 16<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup>***

***Click on the link below for all the details***

***[here:](#)***