

Welcome to the March 2018 issue of MLA NewsBites –



A MESSY MINETT MIX-UP

The proposed Resort Village of Minett, on Lake Rosseau, continues to be in the spotlight. The Township of Muskoka Lakes (TML) planning staff recently advised that the Township's Official Plan does not include certain development restrictions devised for Minett by the Ontario Municipal Board in 2008. These policies may also have been left out of the District's Official Plan. This appears to stem from an error by the Township's planners in 2008. What does this mean? For the last 10 years, any planning decisions concerning Minett have not been based on the OMB decision!

How will this be resolved? TML's Planning Director recommended the Township begin an Official Plan Review in 2019. Council, however, felt this issue needed to be dealt with sooner. District Council has previously asked their staff for a report on the Minett policies, which should include an explanation of this discrepancy. See further details under the 'District' and 'TML' sections below. *The MLA agrees this issue needs to be addressed immediately. We encourage our members in TML to contact their local councillors to press for a deferral of further planning decisions for Minett until the proper standards can be incorporated into the Official Plan. Click [here](#) for councillor contact information.*

THE MLA INTRODUCES OUR 'MLA SAVE MUSKOKA' RESORT TIMELINE

For more than a year, the MLA has been immersed in the complex "resort-conversion" issue. To help you better understand all the various resort-related issues, we have created a new 'MLA Save Muskoka' section on our website. It lists each related development and offers a timeline of key events. The site includes letters from the MLA and other documents that demonstrate the many concerns over the proposed District policies that would allow increased residential density under the guise of a commercial resort. These new policies would change the face of Muskoka's waterfront forever. The page can be found [here](#).

The MLA hopes you find this site useful and encourages you to check in occasionally to stay up to date on this very important issue.

EVERY VOTE COUNTS IN THIS OCTOBER'S MUNICIPAL ELECTION

Municipal elections will take place **Monday October 22nd**. New for 2018, all eligible voters will be able to cast their vote **via phone or online**. In addition to candidates for Mayor, local Council, and applicable School Board, your ballot this year will include a chance to vote for District Chair for the first time. To ensure you're on the voters' list, visit www.voterlookup.ca. **For more information, click here** to hear useful information on the new municipal voting process from Gravenhurst clerk Kayla Thibeault. **You can vote between October 12th and 22nd. You'll need a PIN number.** Your municipality will be sending out an information letter around the end of September containing your individual PIN number and instructions.

The MLA urges every Muskoka property owner to check to ensure you are on the Voters' List, and to cast your vote this October! Muskoka's future is in your hands.

DISTRICT TO HOLD A CANDIDATE INFORMATION SESSION

Anyone interested in running in October's municipal election is invited to attend a free candidate information session on **April 5th, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.**, in the District's Council Chamber in Bracebridge. The session will

discuss the roles and responsibilities of elected officials, eligibility rules, campaign finances, and much more. Those interested in running may file their nomination paperwork from **May 1st to July 27th, 2018**. **The District has confirmed that those unable to attend can view the information session via the District's webcast.** For more info, see the District's press release [here](#):

DISTRICT OF MUSKOKA

District Planning Committee hears Concerns regarding proposed Minett developments – On March 22nd, the District Planning Committee heard from three delegates who expressed their concerns regarding the planning policies for the Resort Village of Minett. The first delegate was Frank Jaglowitz who delegated to ensure that the committee knew that TML's Official Plan never included the Minett OMB policies from 2008. Jaglowitz noted that a number of stringent policies, with regards to density, character, building height, shoreline setbacks and shoreline vegetative buffers, were omitted when TML adopted its Official Plan in 2009. He stated: "It's an unfortunate error and should be corrected ASAP." He requested that the District refrain from any further approvals as it explores its options for moving forward.

The second delegate was planner Stefan Szczerbak of Planscape, the planning agent for Minett developer Ken Fowler Enterprises (KFE). Szczerbak said KFE and Planscape will be happy to work with the District on this issue. While he agreed that the Official Plans should incorporate the OMB policy set, he noted that Planscape expects that current rezoning applications in Minett should be reviewed under the current policies.

Minett resident Paul Richards expressed concerns about "resort residential use" being allowed on commercially-zoned waterfront resort properties. He said the enforcement of any rental policies would be impossible. "How do you control 8 weeks rental per year in a residential condominium? The basic issue is whether it is a resort or is it condo residential?" He referenced Legacy Cottages in Minett as the first example of condo-residential development disguised as resort commercial.

Committee thanked all the delegates but deferred discussion of the issues raised. It wanted to hear input from District staff on the "lost" Minett policies.

Scheduled Airline Service May be Coming to Muskoka by Summer – On March 19th District council voted to authorize the District to negotiate a deal with a commercial air carrier for scheduled passenger service at the Muskoka airport. The District hopes scheduled service will take flight by this summer. A local news story can be found [here](#):

Final Report on the District's "Second Home" Survey – The District has now compiled the results from 3,440 unique responses to the District's Second Home Study. The District uses this study to estimate the impact of Muskoka's 23,000 second homes on future planning.

The report provides some interesting findings:

- * 48% of second-home population is age 55+.
- * Second-home owners use their second homes 8.9 weeks per year. There has been a slight increase in spring and fall use since 2013.
- * 93% of second-home owners do not rent out their homes.
- * 12% of second-home owners plan to move to Muskoka permanently within the next 6 years. That's up from just 8% in 2013.
- * **One of the most interesting results relates to second-home owners' impact on Muskoka's economy: Each second-home household spends an average of \$18,428 per year on household goods (e.g. groceries) and services (e.g. grass cutting, snow removal) in Muskoka. When you multiply \$18,428 by 22,859 households, the total economic impact from the second-home households is estimated at \$421 million! Note this does not include municipal taxes which each cottage owner pays.**

PowerPoint presentation with results can be found [here](#):

The MLA believes the second-home owners to be Muskoka's key economic driver. It clearly challenges some peoples' belief that the resort industry generates the most economic activity in Muskoka. We note the resort report produced by PKF in 2013 estimated the economic impact of resorts at \$200 million a year.

TOWN OF BRACEBRIDGE

Bracebridge Council denies overnight 'Festival Camping' in Annie Williams Park – Council turned down a request by Muskoka Yoga Festival co-founder Ashley Boone to lift the no-camping by-law at Annie Williams Park for the July 13-15th Yoga Festival. The Town has traditionally refused requests by event organizers for overnight camping. Boone warned the organizers might have to look at holding the event in other communities. The local news story can be found [here](#):

TOWN OF GRAVENHURST

Mayor Paisley Donaldson Decides not to run for Mayor in 2018 – Paisley Donaldson served two terms as a Gravenhurst councillor prior to 2010, when then-Mayor John Klinck chose to run for District Chair. She will be leaving public office on Dec. 4th, 2018. An interview with Paisley Donaldson can be found [here](#):
The MLA thanks Mayor Donaldson for her 15 years of public service and wishes her well in future.

Muskoka Wharf Boardwalk Replacement - Gravenhurst began the Muskoka Wharf Boardwalk Replacement Project on **Monday March 26th**. The purpose is to replace portions of the existing deck boards and underlying timbers. **The project is expected to last for nine weeks.** Replacement work will be staged to allow some ongoing usage by the public. The areas under construction will be clearly marked by the contractor. The Town's two-page project Newsletter #1 can be found [here](#):

SEGUIN TOWNSHIP

Councillor Jack Hepworth's Latest Report– Short-Term Cottage Rentals – Township staff has submitted a report that outlines how 12 other municipalities are addressing the regulation of short-term cottage rentals. The Township received more than 70 emails and letters from residents, lake associations and rental operators. Staff has provided three options for council:

1. **Maintain the Status Quo** – Do not regulate short-term cottage rentals. 32 respondents supported this approach. Some believe short-term cottage rentals are good for the economy and help support the tax base. Others are adamant that it is not the responsibility of the Township to regulate short-term cottage rentals.
2. **Prohibit Short-Term Cottage Rentals** – 29 respondents supported this approach. This group generally felt that rentals should not be permitted at all because they are seen as a commercial use occurring in a residential area.
3. **Improved Regulatory Framework for Short-Term Cottage Rentals** – 16 respondents supported this approach. This group generally felt there is need for an improved regulatory framework to control rental activity.

Seguin will be scheduling a Public Meeting in April to hear the public's thoughts on this issue; meeting date to be announced. Input can be provided in writing or in person. Check Councillor Hepworth's website at <http://www.jackhepworth.ca> for updates.

The MLA notes that Seguin is the first municipality in our area to have a public meeting on short-term cottage rentals. The District Official Plan has suggested that the six municipalities within the District might also consider a study on short-term cottage rentals. The MLA is watching closely how Seguin Council, and its residents, handles this important issue.

New Waterfront Design Guidelines –On April 3rd, Seguin is holding a Public Meeting to discuss its new ‘Waterfront Design Guidelines’, a group of recommended guidelines for shoreline development, setbacks, revegetation, etc. The meeting will take place at 4:30 p.m. in Seguin’s Council Chambers. The Guidelines document can be found [here](#):

The MLA appreciates that Seguin has undertaken this project to preserve the health of the lakes and the Muskoka experience. The document’s direction is consistent with our messaging: We agree on the importance of educating residents on septics, invasive species, shoreline vegetation and habitat protection.

TOWNSHIP OF MUSKOKA LAKES (TML)

Error disclosed in Minett Planning Report – TML planning director David Pink informed councillors that TML’s Official Plan (OP) does not contain the approved March 2008 OMB policies for Minett. During 2008 TML was also reviewing its Official Plan, and the OPP policies were inadvertently left out of the new plan. The District as upper-tier authority never caught the error. Rather than correct this error immediately, Pink suggested the Township review this issue as part of its 2019 Official Plan review.

A version of TML’s Official Plan along with the omitted OMB policies can be found [here](#):

Resident Frank Jaglowitz delegated on this error. Ten years ago, he and other residents disagreed with the creation of the “Resort Village of Minett,” which allowed high-density resort and residential development on the waterfront. They appealed the council’s policies to the OMB. A subsequent settlement devised a more stringent policy set. “It is of grave concern to me that significant revisions to the policies resulting from public consultation that were agreed to by all parties and approved by the OMB were not included in the new Official Plan,” said Jaglowitz. The approved policies included reduced densities, increased waterfront setbacks, building height restrictions, and stronger shoreline-naturalization policies. Jaglowitz requested that “TML refrain from any further approvals for the Minett area until everyone has had an opportunity to understand the gravity of this apparent error and explore options to remedy the situation.”

Council felt that this error must be corrected as soon as possible. Council directed David Pink to prepare a report for April’s council meeting. It also recommended holding a public meeting this summer to gauge public opinion on how to move forward.

The MLA is pleased that councillors understand the gravity of the issue and are moving to correct the situation.

Mist Opportunities/Touchstone Requests Return of Securities re new Sewage Treatment Plant – At the Committee of the Whole meeting of March 15, Touchstone developer Mist Opportunities requested the return of \$1.3 million in securities held by TML for construction of Touchstone’s new sewage-treatment plant. Touchstone’s engineering firm confirmed the new treatment plant is built and operational, meeting MOECC requirements. To reduce the developer’s costs, Touchstone’s planning agency, Planscape, requested this issue be ratified at the March council meeting (i.e., the next day), rather than a month later as per normal procedure. The MLA had recommended that TML hold back a portion of the securities to ensure the new plant will be able to function properly when Touchstone is fully occupied during the of summer. Councillor Ruth Nishikawa agreed, suggesting TML hold back 25% of the securities. TML

Planning Director David Pink noted that although TML could withhold 25%, TML has never taken securities for a treatment plant.

Councillors Donelda Hayes, Sandy Currie and Allen Edwards recommended waiting to ratify the refund at the April council meeting to allow for public comment. In the end, councillors agreed to return the full amount of securities in April, although as the Clerk noted, that amount could be debated again at the April council meeting.

The MLA continues to push for a partial hold-back of securities until the new treatment plant has proven it can adequately function at full capacity.

TML Defers a Proposed Fence By-law – In response to the erection of a fence on a year-round waterfront residential property in Port Carling, the Township developed a draft of its first Fence By-law. The proposed by-law would only apply to lands zoned Waterfront Residential and Community Residential. Fences would be limited to a maximum of 8 feet (2.44 metres) in height, and prohibited within 66 feet (20.1 metres) of a navigable waterway. Staff is proposing a \$300 application fee and establishment of an Appeals Committee. Council agreed to defer a decision on the by-law until after a public meeting. To include seasonal residents, council felt the meeting should be scheduled after the May long weekend. (Date to be determined.) The proposed by-law can be found [here](#):

The MLA will advise the date of the public meeting as soon as we know it. We encourage you to attend and voice your opinion.

New Traffic Light at the intersection of Hwy 118 and Bruce Wilson Drive in Port Carling-

The District is planning to have new traffic signals installed and working at the intersection of Muskoka Road 118 and Bruce Wilson Drive by July. Minor road and turning lane improvements are also expected. This traffic light should help with the congestion of traffic entering and exiting Tim Horton's and Foodland. The installation of a traffic light was a condition of approval of the Tim Horton's restaurant.

Replacement of TML Street Lighting to LED Lights - Director of Public Works Roger Young reported on the economics of changing TML's street lighting to LED fixtures. The cost to convert TML's 481 street lights is \$349,000. But TML would receive a one-time rebate of \$24,725 and annual savings of \$52,000 in electricity and maintenance costs. Young noted that new LED lights can last up to 100,000 hours (~22 years), resulting in lower maintenance costs.

Roger recommended this project be funded by a 6-year serial debenture through Infrastructure Ontario at an interest rate of 2%. The annual savings could offset the debenture payments. Councillors debated to opt for the debenture or to self-fund the project through its own reserves. CAO Steve McDonald noted that "TML does not have a lot of money in reserves and I'm not sure TML should tie up \$350,000." Council voted 5 to 3 to self-fund the project through reserves. Councillors in favour of self-funding were Linda Barrick-Spearn, Allen Edwards, Donelda Hayes, Terry Ledger and Ruth Nishikawa. Councillors opposed were Jean-Ann Baranik, Sandy Currie and Gault McTaggart.

While the MLA supports energy-efficient lighting, we question whether this one-time purchase is an appropriate use of reserves.

Update on the Muskoka Hospital Debate

The debate continues surrounding future hospital options in Muskoka. See below for two recent news stories:

- (1) The financial aspects of each hospital option found [here](#);
- (2) The frustration of Huntsville's mayor over the continued pressure for one hospital site found [here](#);

Update on the Port Carling Health Hub

The Port Carling Health Hub is looking for financial support to extend its operating hours this summer. Thanks to a one-time donation last year, the by-appointment-only clinic was able to hire a second Nurse Practitioner and an

Administrative Assistant to provide additional health care on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays from mid-May to mid- September. In order to provide the same service this year again, the Health Hub is hoping to raise \$25,000. For information on how you can help, please see the following link:
<https://www.brockandwillawellnesscentre.com/>

The MLA Wishes All our Members a Wonderful Spring!
