

Welcome to the Summer 2017 issue of MLA NewsBites –



The MLA was busy in July participating in the District's new Official Plan.

This key document determines the balance between preserving the unique Muskoka environment and promoting development. The MLA is very concerned with the District's proposal to provide increased flexibility for resort developers - including allowing up to 50% of a resort to be residential. This is a **HUGE change of direction** from the current Official Plan which requires a resort to be 100% commercial. We are very concerned this will lead to high-density housing projects on the Muskoka waterfront!

If these policies are adopted by the District, expect resorts on the waterfront to increase. Note resorts, as commercial entities, are allowed higher densities than allowed for residential zoning. The District is motivated to keep the resort industry alive. The MLA is watching and delegating to ensure that the cost of increased permission for resorts to include residential uses will **NOT** degrade water quality, increase noise and have a negative impact on shorelines. **Again, if approved these directional policies could change the character of Muskoka's waterfront FOREVER.** (Note: TML has the bulk of the resort properties in the District of Muskoka.)

We are asking our members to carefully read the District consultant's presentation found [here](#). We are also strongly encouraging you to attend the District's August 29th statutory meeting in Bracebridge to voice your opinions. This is a critical change in thinking. The future of Muskoka's waterfront rests in your hands. See meeting dates and locations below.

Historically the District was the overriding authority which strove to balance the preservation of Muskoka's unique environment while still allowing appropriate development. This Official Plan's draft policies clearly side with developers' objectives. The MLA believes that STRICT and ENFORCEABLE RULES need to be in place to protect Muskoka's prime asset – the waterfront. All the proposed changes which transfer authority to the local municipality make the MLA question why the District exists/ is involved at all. Take time to read the consultant's presentation and join the MLA in attending the District's meeting on August 29th to stand up for the Muskoka you love. If adopted, Muskoka's current 'environment first' shorelines and communities may be unrecognizable in the future.

We are also urging seasonal residents to fill out both the [District's Second Home Study](#) and the [Township of Muskoka Lakes Service Level/Council Composition Survey](#). See below for more information on both. Your input MATTERS!!!

Summary of Key Dates:

1. **Now until August 31st** – Complete the District's on-line Second Home Study survey.
2. **August 17th** (9 a.m.) TML Council Chambers, Port Carling – TML Public Meeting re feedback on community services & council composition. Also complete TML's on-line survey.
3. **August 17th** (7 -9 p.m.) District Council Chambers, 70 Pine Street, Bracebridge – Open Houses re the District's new Official Plan.
4. **August 29th** (7 -9 p.m.) Statutory Public Meeting, Rotary Club, 131 Wellington Street, Bracebridge – Your **last** opportunity to address council on the District's new Official Plan and you will not need to apply to make a delegation.

DISTRICT OF MUSKOKA

District of Muskoka's Proposed New Official Plan's Resort Policies – The District acknowledges that resorts in Muskoka are declining, resulting in a loss of tourist dollars. In an effort to retain existing resorts and encourage new ones, resort policies in the proposed new Official Plan are taking a new direction. The consultant's presentation can be found [here](#).

The District has held several public meetings to receive input on the new policies and has heard back from resort developers and other stakeholders (such as the MLA). At the July 20th District Planning Committee, councillors heard from their consultant a summary of public comments and concerns. The District has listened to the developers' wish for more flexibility in the policies and they propose more flexibility. Each resort will be judged on a case-by-case basis. However, developers are expressing concern over *too much* flexibility; they would prefer more specific rules and regulations.

Other worrying changes from the MLA's perspective are the proposal to reduce the requirement that developers to put up 100% security to fund sewage systems. Other 'arrangements' may be allowed. And, neighbors should be concerned that on-site management may no longer be required

MLA Champions another Public Meeting re the District Official Plan – As stated above, the last opportunity to provide your feedback on District's Official Plan is August 29th. The MLA has spoken in favour of allowing the public another opportunity after that date to respond to any changes made to the Official Plan policies as a result of the August 29th meeting. District Planning Committee discussed this possibility at their July 20th meeting. Some councillors were concerned that another public meeting may delay the adoption of this plan by this current council. But in the end, Committee directed staff to schedule another public meeting in November; exact date to be determined. ***The MLA believes strongly in the ability to provide sufficient opportunities for the public to comment on proposed changes; especially significant changes as outlined in the proposed Official Plan draft. The MLA appreciates the efforts of District staff to hold an extra meeting.***

Second Home Study Update – As reported in last month's NewsBites, the District wants to learn more about their seasonal population through an online survey on the District's website called the 'Second Home Study'. ***NOTE: There are more seasonal residents in the Muskoka region than permanent residents, and the District is recognizes the significant contribution of the seasonal population.*** The survey provides an opportunity for the District 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 for input until August 31st.** To date, only 2,600 responses have been received; that's considerably fewer responses than compared to the previous 2013 study. ***Once again the MLA strongly urges ALL SEASONAL residents to fill out this important survey. Your feedback will help shape the future of Muskoka. Use [this link](#) to access the survey. Paper copies of the survey are available upon request.***

Discussion on Changes to Council Composition – District council met on July 17th to again deal with issues related to the composition of District council. New provincial legislation Bill 68 states that as of January 1st, 2018 all Ontario municipalities are required to conduct a review of their council's composition in their first two years of office. This meeting again showed that opinions are varied on whether or not to hire a consultant to help facilitate discussions and whether the weighting of the seasonal population should be 100%. It was pointed that at last month's meeting, council had voted to weight the seasonal population at 100% **'in principle only'**. Therefore it would be up to the consultant to review this and make a recommendation to council on this issue. Some councillors felt the consultant's fee of \$20,000, and a 90-day timeline to prepare a report, were optimistic.

The District CAO stated that there were funds available if the \$20,000 was exceeded. Two motions were voted on as follows:

1. *A motion was put forward that a Request for Proposals be issued seeking a consultant to undertake a District Council Composition Review as outlined in the agreed upon Terms of Reference. Carried on a vote of 15 to 7.*
2. *A motion to establish the governance structure for the District Council Composition Review in the form of an Ad Hoc Committee; to be determined. District staff will be directed to assist in the Review as required. Carried on a vote of 16 to 6.*

As previously stated the MLA is watching this item closely. We hope that the consultant will recommend, and council will agree, that equal weighting of the seasonal population is the only fair thing to do.

TOWN OF GRAVENHURST

Gravenhurst's Local Bus Service 'The Loop' is Up and Running - Gravenhurst's pilot transit project called 'The Loop' is providing transportation throughout the urban centre on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays all summer long. The service is free for July and August. The Town of Gravenhurst wants to hear back from you with your thoughts on the route and scheduling times. For bus schedule and route map, plus an on-line user survey see [here](#).

SEGUIN TOWNSHIP

Councillor Jack Hepworth's Latest Update –Councillor Hepworth, in his July 4th Council and Community Report, thanks Seguin Community Services and Protection Staff for an excellent Canada 150 Celebration activity Friday June 30, at the Rosseau Waterfront Park. He also reports that *The RCAC (Rosseau Community Action Committee), on behalf of the Rosseau and area community, is seeking a commitment from Council to undertake a Feasibility Study, and a Master Plan of needed repairs, of the Rosseau Memorial Hall. The goal is to have any work completed in time for the Centennial celebration in 2024. Councillor Hepworth reports “The Hall is an iconic building that is cherished by residents, permanent and seasonal alike. While seasonal residents may not utilize the Hall as regularly as permanent residents, they feel as strongly about preserving the Hall as regular users and in some instances, even more so.”*

*The report also includes the blog posting from the Rosseau Nursing Station. The posting includes the hours the Nursing Station will be open all summer and all the many events happening at the Nursing Station. In addition to his monthly council report, Councillor Hepworth relays an interesting story and request from Ted Yard, the previous owner of Camp Hollyburn, now the site of Camp Oochiqueas. Mr. Yard was requesting help in the search for a historic air raid siren from East Grinstead, which was donated to Rosseau as a fire warning signal. Mr. Yard hoped to deliver it to the War Plane Heritage Museum. Councillor Hepworth confirms that the siren has been located in the Rosseau Fire Hall and that discussions are underway to deliver it to the heritage museum. **Thanks so much Councillor Hepworth for not only providing important council news but also stories of important local community history!***

TOWNSHIP OF MUSKOKA LAKES (TML)

Community Input Requested re: Service Levels & Council Composition – On July 13th TML held the first of two public meetings to receive public input on township services and what, if any, services should be ‘axed’ in order to balance next year’s budget. Although members of the public were present, no one spoke. Unfortunately an important Treasurer’s report which outlined various potential service level cutbacks was not available until that morning. And the on-line survey was also not active prior to the meeting. As a result, the public did not have enough time to digest the information and provide any constructive feedback.

The Treasurer’s background report, the on-line survey and an overview of the issue can now be found on the Township’s website [here](#). Possible service level reductions could include:

- closing roads to save on cost of bridge replacements
 - reverting from high float (paved) roads to gravel on some low usage roads
 - closing fire halls and/or community centres
 - designating certain roads as seasonal with no winter maintenance/ plowing
 - abandonment or closure of public wharfs and ramps rather than replacement
 - reduced maintenance of parks and cemeteries
- ...or maybe you think that efficiencies can be found elsewhere at the township.

Council wants to know your thoughts on the appropriate size of TML council. The on-line survey is live until September 29th and paper copies are available upon request at the Township Office in Port Carling. The next public meeting is scheduled for Thursday, August 17th, 9 a.m. in the Township’s council chambers. The Mayor has also requested input whether an evening and/or weekend public meeting is needed to be scheduled. A local news article on this topic can be found [here](#). ***The MLA stresses the importance of providing feedback to the Mayor and councillors on these important issues. Fill out the survey and if you feel you would like an evening or a Saturday meeting, or both, available in all 3 wards – let your council know! The input you provide will form the basis for some tough decisions for the 2018 budget.***

Update on TML’s Battle over Proposed Increased OPP Servicing Costs –Over the last year TML, together with Georgian Bay and Lake of Bays townships, has engaged a consultant/lobbyist in an effort to reduce OPP servicing costs for the three townships. At the July council meeting, Mayor Don Furniss stated that the consultant is recommending that area residents support this initiative by providing input to Premier Wynne via a township petition and letter campaign. The revised Police Services Act is coming out this fall and TML wants to be seen as doing as much as possible to influence it. TML is hoping to have an on-line petition on their website in the near future. ***The MLA will let you know when the petition is on the township’s website.***

Council Upholds their Decision to Deny a Pit and Quarry 2 kms. North of Skeleton Lake – In June TML council voted unanimously to deny an application to rezone a property near Skeleton Lake for a proposed pit and quarry operation. The applicant has appealed TML’s decision to the OMB. At the July council meeting council reaffirmed this decision by a unanimous vote NOT to use dispute resolution techniques to settle this appeal. It is noted that the province is the approval authority for pits and quarries. ***The MLA is impressed that council has remained firmly opposed to this inappropriately located pit and quarry.***

TML’s ATV By-law – TML’s 1 year term All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) By-law has now expired. As there have been no issues and/or complaints raised by the community, councillors recommended that the by-law remain in effect. At District Council on July 17th, council voted unanimously to extend the permission for limited use of All-Terrain and Off-Road Vehicles on all Township of Muskoka Lakes roads to December 31st, 2017. It is expected that the by-law will be extended indefinitely on December 31st. District staff need another six months to complete their

research and receive a final report from the OPP. ***The MLA is pleased to learn there have been no issues allowing ATVs on TML and District roads.***

Port Carling Health Hub – Is it Sustainable? – The Ministry of Health & Long Term Care approved a 3 year trial of health hubs in Muskoka. There are 3 health hub buildings in Muskoka (Dorset, Wahta & Port Carling) and one mobile health unit. The Ministry provided minimal funding for one nurse practitioner and 1 administrative assistant. Although Ministry funding wasn't enough to get the Port Carling Health Hub established, due to the generosity of donors a plot of land was donated as was additional funding for a building. More than 1,500 people are registered across all 4 Muskoka health hubs. The Ministry has approved an extension of this project based on supporting documents that prove it can be sustainable.

Today the Port Carling Health Hub has 563 registered patients. There were 500 visits to the Health Hub by the seasonal population last year. This spring the Hub received a one-time funding donor gift for a second nurse practitioner, from early May to September. This now allows the hub to be open Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays which is more convenient for the seasonal population. This fall there will be a working session to determine if the Health Hub is sustainable without private funding. Although the Health Hub is financially stable now, a request may come before council to convert the Port Carling Health Hub to base funding. ***The MLA recognizes how successful the Port Carling Health Hub has been for the local residents. We remind the seasonal population to call ahead for an appointment. We appreciate that funding was available this year for another nurse practitioner to allow the hub to be open Thursday, Friday and Saturday to better serve the seasonal population.***

Bracebridge Midnight Madness Street Festival

A Muskoka Tradition

Friday, August 4th, 2017

This year's downtown 'Midnight Madness' promises to be a night full of fun and excitement – and bargains galore! There's live music, great shopping and family fun at Memorial Park – home of the Kids Zone where admission is \$5.00 per child. Musical Entertainment provided by Blue Rodeo tribute band Blue Radio.

Muskoka Lakes Library's Annual Summer Silent Auction

Port Carling Branch

July 21st to August 17th, 2017

The much anticipated annual Friends of the Library silent auction is up and running at the Port Carling branch of the Muskoka Lakes Public Library with an amazing array of items and services from businesses and individuals from across Muskoka! Included in the auction are original art works, jewelry, gift baskets, gift certificates, clothing, antiques, décor items, household items, water toys, and this year..... a fully restored 16 foot, 1925 Dippy Waterford boat! Yes, you read/heard that correctly... a fully restored 1925 Dippy! The auction is now open and closes Thursday, August 17 at 1:30. All proceeds go to support the Muskoka Lakes Public Library with branches in Port Carling and Bala.

For more information on all the great silent auction items see [here](#).