



Welcome to the October 2016 issue of MLA NewsBites –

It's fall and for many it's time to close up the cottage and store your boats for winter. . Check to make sure your locks and deadbolts are in good working order. Remember to store items in your boathouse well above the boathouse floor in preparation for water levels that rise in the spring. Ensure someone checks on your property regularly (at least monthly) over the winter. Insurance may not cover you if your property is not regularly visited during the winter months (check your policy for visit requirements. Remember to remove any liquor or personal sentimental items from your vacation home. Insurance can cover the costs of item loss, but nothing can replace those lost sentimental items - as outlined in the story [here](#).

The MLA wishes all our members a wonderful Thanksgiving weekend and hope that you enjoy Muskoka's vibrant 'cavalcade of colour'.

DISTRICT OF MUSKOKA

District's Proposed New Lake System Health Policy –Summer Valentine, District's Director of Planning and Christy Doyle, Director of Environment and Watershed Programs, met this summer with many interest groups, municipalities and lake associations to explain the District's proposed revisions. The old planning policy, based on the Recreational Water Quality Model, focused solely on phosphorous concentration but the new policy is to require the implementation of "best management practices" for all new development or redevelopment of shoreline properties. Best management practices means all new development and redevelopment of shoreline properties will be subject to site plan control as enacted under the jurisdiction of the local municipality. Site plan control includes requirements for vegetative buffers, storm water management, enhanced setbacks and shoreline naturalization. The District will continue phosphorous testing in our lakes.

Whereas the existing water quality model, in place for the past ten plus years, was based on lake sensitivity and lake classification, this new policy proposes to eliminate those classifications. This new policy is a major change in the District's Official Plan and will require an amendment to the Official Plan. Policies, once finalized, will go to District Council for approval and then on to the province for its approval. ***The MLA met with Summer and Christy on several occasions to fully understand this new water quality model and its implications to local area planning applications and municipal planning staff. The MLA still has concerns regarding the protection of all Muskoka's lakes, especially those lakes identified as over-threshold and currently experiencing problems of blue-green algae blooms.***

The District will be holding a statutory public meeting on October 20th at 9 a.m. in District Council chambers. The MLA urges all interested parties to attend and those with concerns to make a request to speak at this meeting.

District begins work on a NEW Official Plan (OP)– An Official Plan (OP) provides the policy framework that guides growth and physical change for the next 20 years. An OP incorporates provincial policies and objectives along with community-driven priorities to fuel a prosperous economy and a healthy environment through updated land use planning policies. A consultant has been engaged. Last July District Council discussed a variety of topics they wished to be considered in the OP review process. These included reducing the size of the document and improving its readability; flexibility when applying policy to applications; increasing public access to water; strategies to encourage youth to stay in or return to Muskoka; ability to down-zone properties; and increased active transportation strategies for connectivity between communities. A common theme was the

new OP should be less rule-based and more strategic. Public consultation is scheduled for fall 2016 with the policies to be considered in fall /winter 2016/17. ***The MLA will be following the status of the policy development closely to ensure that the protection of Muskoka's environment is an over-riding principle, and also to ensure that the public has ample opportunity to speak.***

District Council votes down hiring a Facilitator re District Composition – Earlier this year, District Council initiated discussions on what the appropriate number of District councillors should be. Currently District Council is comprised of 4 representatives from each of Bracebridge, Gravenhurst, Huntsville and the Township of Muskoka Lakes. Georgian Bay and Lake of Bays each have only 3 representatives. The total number of Councillors is 22, plus the District Chair, who is appointed. At the September 19th District council meeting, councillors voted on the motion to hire a facilitator to lead the process of a council composition review. After much discussion and debate, the motion was defeated by a vote of 11 to 10. While some councillors thought a facilitator would help councillors navigate the options, the majority thought these discussions could best be held amongst the current council and avoid an unnecessary \$20,000 to \$50,000 expense. ***The MLA will keep members apprised of any developments.***

District of Muskoka applied for funding to update Flood Plain Mapping - Water management is a significant issue in Muskoka. The District has applied for funding through the Federal/National Disaster Mitigation program to develop updated flood plain mapping. Recently the District also wrote to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs expressing their desire to update information about Muskoka's local waterways; particularly with regard to Muskoka's significant flood plains. In addition, they requested an immediate initiation of a full review of the provincial Muskoka River Water Management Plan. The letter made reference to the flooding that occurred in both 2013 and 2016. The letter states: ***"As people across Muskoka continue to recover from significant rain events and floods, we propose that mapping Muskoka's flood plains is essential to ensure appropriate management of the District of Muskoka's shared natural environment and water system and, in turn, the continued sustainability and prosperity of our area in the face of increasing flood events."*** ***The MLA is pleased to support the District of Muskoka in these important requests. Our letter of support can be found [here](#).***

District continues to Explore Scheduled Passenger Service at the Muskoka Airport – District Council has voted to investigate the feasibility of scheduled passenger service at the Muskoka Airport. Next steps include gathering additional data and exploring opportunities for public funding and private investors to support capital requirements. A project team made up of representatives from the District and Regional Tourism Organization 12 (Explorer's Edge) will confirm budget, financing, timing, and agreement authorizations requirements should the project proceed. A report on the findings from these activities will be prepared for the consideration of the Planning and Economic Development Committee in October. ***The MLA is interested to learn if this air service is viable.***

TOWN OF BRACEBRIDGE

Bracebridge Public Meeting on September 27th re Comprehensive Zoning By-law –The Town has completed its first draft of the proposed amendments to Phase 2 of the Zoning By-law. The new draft was presented at a public meeting on September 27th at 6 p.m. in the Bracebridge Municipal Office.. Possible revisions to the rural area include: changes to lot size, secondary units in rural areas, the use of trailers and shipping containers as accessory buildings, updated policies re pits and quarries, policies relating to home offices/ industries in rural areas and the creation of a Rural Institutional Zone. Waterfront policies are also being reviewed as follows: minimum frontage for boathouses, percentage of shoreline coverage, policies for the creation of new lots and water access lots, dock projections on the North and South branches of the Muskoka River and setbacks and buffers along the waterfront. The planning staff will review comments made from this meeting and make any

appropriate changes to the current draft. The new draft is expected to go to committee late fall. ***The MLA encourages all seasonal and year round residents to view the new draft document [here](#). (Note: The original by-law begins page 11 and a red-line version with proposed changes begins page 165).***

Downtown Bracebridge's Clock Tower Bell to Chime Again –According to a recent local news story – “Town of Bracebridge councillors had a lengthy discussion during the Sept. 20 general committee meeting over the topic of the clock tower, which also generated a great deal of interest on social media last week. It was determined at this meeting, by a unanimous vote, that the clock tower will ring again. General committee actually threw out making the chiming of the clock an exemption to the noise bylaw but will in fact amend the bylaw itself to include the clock tower as an item in the noise bylaw.” The decision is expected to be ratified at the September 28th council meeting. Local news story is [here](#). ***The MLA is pleased that Council recognizes the importance of maintaining and respecting the historical aspects of Bracebridge.***

TOWN OF GRAVENHURST

Update on Gravenhurst's New Official Plan Review – The Town has held two public meetings since the end of July to receive comments from the public on the proposed OP. The first was a public open house Saturday, August 13th. The second public meeting was held Tuesday, August 23rd to formally present the new Official Plan (OP) to Council. Both meetings were well attended by seasonal and year round residents. Written comments were requested to be submitted to the Town by September 16th whereby the Town's planning consultant, Planscape, will draft a summary document for presentation to Council in October (at the earliest). Once Council approves the document, it will go to District Council for final approval. ***The MLA attended both the August 13th and 23rd public meetings and has sent in our final submission to the Town. Our letters can be found [here](#).***

We were pleased to see so many lake association representatives attend both meetings and take the time to delegate to Council. We are looking forward to reviewing the final draft and hearing council's comments.

Council Appoints a Muskoka Regional Centre Review Committee– This Review Committee has been charged with the responsibility of recommending the preferred partner for the redevelopment of the former Muskoka Regional Centre. The Request for Expressions of Interest (RFEOI) closed on September 16th. A total of three proposals were received. The committee will recommend a preferred partner to Planning Council at the October 25th meeting. Once Council approves the recommended proposal, and subsequently finalizes the details, it will negotiate the ultimate sale and transfer of ownership to the preferred redevelopment partner. This process is expected to conclude in early 2017. The full press release can be found [here](#). ***The MLA hopes that the preferred partner will be cognisant of the importance of the prominence of this property's Lake Muskoka shoreline.***

Proposed Changes to User Fees and Charges By-law – Gravenhurst Council will be considering changes to the User Fees and Charges By-law at a meeting scheduled for Tuesday, October 18th, 2016 at 3 p.m. at the Municipal Office. Any person wishing to provide comments or concerns is invited to do so in writing, addressed to the Manager of Revenue and Taxation, Stephanie Phillips, 3-5 Pineridge Gate, Gravenhurst P1P 1Z3 - no later than Friday, October 14th, 2016. For a full list of user fees, highlighting which fees are proposed to increase January 1 2017, please see the following report, broken down by individual department [here](#). ***The MLA hopes everyone takes the time to review the proposed changes; particularly those in the Planning and Parks departments. It is hoped the rates charged are an accurate reflection of the time spent on the application, and that individual applications are not subsidized by the population as a whole.***

SEGUIN TOWNSHIP

Councillor Jack Hepworth latest report can be found here: www.jackhepworth.ca. Councillor Hepworth's September 19th report details the financial details of supporting the Nursing Station Summer Weekend hour extension; West Parry Sound SMART Report and Seguin's Septic Re-inspection report. In addition, information is included on the following two community events: The Great Muskoka Paddling Experience (Saturday, October 8th) and the 4th Annual Rosseau Pumpkin Festival (also on Saturday, October 8th). ***The MLA hopes everyone can take part in at least one of Saturday's fun events!***

TOWNSHIP OF MUSKOKA LAKES (TML)

2017 Budget Schedule – The following is a tentative schedule for the 2017 Budget:

- Sept/Oct 2016 – Departmental development of 2017 requirements
- Nov 2016 – Consolidation and Treasurer review
- Dec 2016 – Presentation to Finance Review Committee
- Jan 2017 – Review by Committee of the Whole
- Feb 2017 – Council adoption

Treasurer Shannon Johnson stated there is a need to increase reserve contributions to roads and infrastructure in the 2017 budget. Since 2011, reserve funds have been utilized to close the gap between asset investment and depreciation. Council should continue to make a strict commitment to adequate replenishment of these reserves so that they may continue to be used for this purpose. When reviewing the capital budget, special attention will be aid to the Asset Management Plan; especially as it relates to Roads and Fire departments.

Councillor Phil Harding once again stated that he is concerned that at some point TML will 'hit a wall' regarding reserves. He stated "We need to create a budget where our reserves equal, or balance out, our 20 year capital needs. We need to balance our books. I'd like this recorded in the minutes." Councillors Sandy Currie, Ruth Nishikawa, Gault McTaggart and Allen Edwards all agreed with Phil. ***The MLA will be attending all budget discussions. As in the past, the MLA will continue to request that a full-time By-Law Enforcement Officer be hired, as agreed to last year in the 2016 budget.***

Ward Boundary and Council Composition Review – In June, council agreed to undergo a review of TML's ward boundaries and council composition, in preparation for the 2018 election. At the September council meeting, staff presented a detailed report to council which included a breakdown of the current council's composition along with maps showing the boundaries of Wards A (Bala), B (Windermere area) and C (Port Carling). Staff recommended that a consultant be hired, at a cost of \$15,000 to \$20,000, to help facilitate councillors in this review. Mayor Furniss was in favour of hiring a consultant. However councillors Phil Harding, Terry Ledger and Allen Edwards were not in favour of spending thousands of dollars to rework boundaries and pay for a consultant. However Bala councillors Sandy Currie, Donelda Kruckel and Ruth Nishikawa all agreed that a boundary change was needed for Moon River Road in Bala; so that all residents along that road would be included in Ward A (Bala) and not half in Ward A and half in Ward C. Council voted in favour of staff sending out an RFP (Request for Proposals). ***The MLA feels that TML council should decide what they would prefer prior to hiring a consultant.***

TML Organizational Review- In December 2015, TML hired Imagine Inc. to review current staffing and the organizational structure at the township office. Last August an executive summary was presented which recommended several changes to be accomplished in a 2-phase sequence.

Phase 1- being identified as 'quick wins/within 1 year' estimated cost of \$60,000 to \$90,000 - recommended hiring the following full-time personnel: a Human Resources/Health & Safety specialist, a By-law Enforcement Officer, a Community Centre Assistant and a Communications & Economic Development Specialist. Also recommended to revise the existing job expectations of the Public Works Technician and the portfolio of the Prevention Office. Semi-annual staff meetings were also recommended. Some of the costs for new hires (example a By-law Enforcement Officer) had been earmarked in the 2016 budget and that the Public Works Technician position's duties have been reorganized.

Phase 2 –to be implemented within 3 years –estimated cost of \$200,000 to \$255,000 - recommended revising the current Treasurer's position, hiring a Deputy Clerk, merge the Planning and Building into a single department, hire a Development Services Director, conduct a space optimization review (with possible office expansion), make improvements to the current Performance Appraisal program and consider a targeted staffing allocation review.

Some Councillors have significant concerns about the Review. Councillor Terry Ledger was extremely disappointed with the review, stating "We need to be effective and lean-thinking. This is just pyramid-building." Councillor Phil Harding stated "The report recommends we need a larger building and more staff. We have to balance our budgets going forward first." Councillor Allen Edwards stated "There may be ways to streamline procedures. Let's step back and have committee take another look at this." The CAO will be taking councillors comments and bringing back another report in October. The consultant's full presentation can be found [here](#).

The MLA appreciates council's efforts to keep costs under control especially as decaying infrastructure is stressing the township's current resources. However, the MLA continues to state that in order to provide efficient and effective government service to its taxpayers, the council needs to hire at least one full-time By-law Enforcement Officer as was identified and approved in their 2016 budget.

Bala Falls Road Bridge Decision (Not the Hwy. 169 bridge) –According to a TML Public Works report, "In late 2015 the Bala Falls Road Bridge located in Bala, Ontario (by the 'Stone Church') was identified as requiring substantial rehabilitation or replacement during the provincially mandated biennial bridge inspection. The inspection report notes many of the existing girders and decking are in poor condition and require rehabilitation at a minimum to maintain the current 5 tonne load limit posting". TML's Director of Public Works presented council with 7 options for the bridge; ranging from various forms of repair to removing the bridge altogether to construct a pedestrian / snowmobile bridge. Although removing the bridge was cited as the most cost effective measure, Councillor Phil Harding argued against it. "That bridge is part of the history of Bala. I am not in favour of removing this bridge. I think we'd need public consultation before doing that." He went on to suggest that replacing the timber decking with concrete would be the most cost effective route. Committee agreed with Councillor Harding with the exception of Councillor Terry Ledger who would have preferred a pedestrian / snowmobile bridge. TML will be pursuing provincial infrastructure funding to help with the repair costs. **The MLA agrees that the Bala Falls Road Bridge is an important heritage feature and is hopeful that funding will be secured to repair it.**

Touchstone/Mist Opportunities Inc.'s new Site Plan and Treatment Plant – In August Mist Opportunities requested approval for a revised site plan agreement. According to the MOECC (Ministry of Environment & Climate Change) Mist Opportunities cannot occupy any new building until a new sewage treatment plant has been built and is operational. Mist Opportunities proposes to construct their new sewage treatment plant in the fall of 2016 and build 14 new resort units. Their revised new plan includes 2 new 'Beach Houses', 2 new East and West 'Boathouse' buildings and an increased number of parking spaces from 78 to 217. The new proposed development complies with the allowable square footage and permitted density as approved in 2005.

As of September 30th the revised site plan agreement has not been completed and no securities taken. The council has stated they wish securities equalling 100% of the cost of the treatment plant as part of the agreement. The agreement will expire on March 15th, 2017 unless the corresponding Site Plan Agreement has been entered into and registered on title of the lands. ***Prior to the council meeting, the MLA met with Bob McLaughlin (Mist Opportunities Inc.) and Joe Witlox ('newterra' treatment plants) on site at Touchstone to learn more about the resort's expansion plans and the details of their new state-of-the-art treatment plant. The MLA came away from this meeting hopeful that the assurances that Touchstone will be building a new sewage treat plan will be fulfilled.***

New Heritage Advisory Committee Appointments – Council has re-established the TML Heritage Advisory Committee. Councillors Gault McTaggart and Terry Ledger, along with Greg Knight, Susan Daghish and Mike Webb make up the committee. ***The MLA is pleased to know a committee is in place to continue to try to preserve those heritage properties, landmarks and landscapes that are so important to the Muskoka area.***

Bala Cranberry Festival – October 14th to 16th, 2016

Every year, on the weekend after Thanksgiving, Bala hosts the annual Cranberry Festival with lots of fun, entertainment, food and shopping.

Festival Admission

\$8.00 for Adults; \$5.00 for Children 7 – 12 years old; Children age 6 and under are free!

A complete listing of events can be found here:

<http://www.balacranberryfestival.on.ca/activities-events/>

Important Notice re the Muskoka Community Health Hub, Port Carling

The Community Health Hub/Nursing Station is located in Port Carling. For more information on the Nursing Station see: brockandwillawellnesscentre.com
If you are in need of its services, call for an appointment first.

Address: 147-3 Medora Street, Port Carling

Phone Number: 705- 765-7655

Nurse Practitioner: Meagin Gilchrist

Administrative Assistant: Nancy Beauregard