



Welcome to May 2016 NewsBites –

Welcome back to the cottage! It was a less severe winter than the past couple and the MLA hopes that you found your property in good shape and that the spring flooding had not caused too much damage. The MLA Water Level Task Force has been working overtime on your behalf meeting with government officials in order to ensure what took place on the lakes this spring doesn't happen again.

### **A BRIEF UPDATE ON THE WATER LEVEL TASK FORCE**

The Task Force has met with four Muskoka Townships, District of Muskoka Chair John Klinck, the Muskoka Watershed Council, Federal and Provincial MPs, the Federation of Ontario Cottage Associations (FOCA) and the most influential, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNR). At each of these meetings, we have raised our concerns and presented our recommended action plan.

The MLA's request to the MNR is simple and concise:

1. Lower water levels in Lake Muskoka, Lake Rosseau and Lake Joseph to the lower limits of their respective Normal Operating Zones by March 15<sup>th</sup> each year until a new acceptable Muskoka River Water Management Plan (MRWMP) is implemented.
2. Initiate a process to revise the MRWMP as soon as possible.
3. Allow the MLA to be one of the participating parties to create the new MRWMP.

MLA President Michael Hart has spoken with a local news reporter about the MLA Task Force; see story [here](#).

***The MLA thanks all those who have participated in our flood damage survey. To date we have received over 900 very detailed responses with estimates on damage from the high water levels this spring. We are keeping the survey open until May 31<sup>st</sup>, to incorporate any damage estimates from those of you just coming up to your waterfront property for the first time this spring. If you have not already done so, please take a few minutes after the May long weekend to complete or update the survey.***

### **REQUEST FROM THE MLA**

***Many of you will be attending your local road, bay or island association meetings, re-connecting with neighbours and your Muskoka friends over the next few weeks. The MLA needs your support. We need a larger member base to have a stronger voice at Queen's Park and with the MNR. Please encourage your friends and neighbours to **JOIN THE MLA**. It's not expensive and simple to join at [www.mla.on.ca](http://www.mla.on.ca). Thank you in advance for your on-going support as a valued member and welcome back to Muskoka!***

The MLA reminds you to pick up your 2016 MLA Yearbook and any seedlings you may have ordered at the Port Carling Community Centre on Saturday, May 21<sup>st</sup> from 9 a.m. to noon. The training session for the MLA Water Quality volunteers will also be taking place that morning starting at 9 a.m. Once again, the MLA expresses our gratitude to those volunteers who take part in the water testing program. Your dedication to keep our lakes and rivers healthy for future generations is to be commended.

While you are working hard at getting your cottage ready for summer, and battling those pesky black-flies, remember that HGTV's *Income Property: On Vacation* states that Muskoka remains the top spot to buy a vacation home in Canada. See [here](#).

Lastly, the MLA wishes you a safe, happy and enjoyable May long weekend. Summer 2016 has begun!

And now on to our regular NewsBites content -

## **DISTRICT OF MUSKOKA**

**Have your say regarding Council's Strategic Priorities** - District Council is updating its Strategic Priorities and is currently looking for input from Muskoka residents and community groups. Council's Strategic Priorities are used to guide its decision making. The current draft highlights five strategic priority focus areas:

- Natural Environment
- Governance
- Economy
- Infrastructure
- Community

Public input is encouraged through a survey on the District's website. The survey closes on June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2016 after which staff will prepare a report on public and community feedback and recommend approval of the revised Strategic Priorities to Council. The draft priorities and survey can be found [here](#). ***The MLA encourages all residents to fill out the survey to ensure your ideas and thoughts are heard at the District of Muskoka.***

**OPP Costing Model Discussion-** The current OPP costing model has the Township of Muskoka Lakes, Township of Georgian Bay and the Township of Lake of Bays paying the majority of the policing costs while the Towns of Bracebridge, Gravenhurst and Huntsville see a reduction in policing costs. At last month's District council meeting, a motion was put forward by Township of Muskoka Lakes Mayor Don Furniss, and seconded by Lake of Bays Mayor Bob Young, that the District change their current costing model, based on assessed property value, to a fairer model for all 6 municipalities in the District. The proposed costing formula is one the provincial OPP uses based on a fixed charge per dwelling. The motion was defeated on a vote of 11 to 7. The costing model will remain based on assessment. ***The MLA appreciates the motion put forward by Mayors Furniss and Young and agrees that the costing formula based on a fixed charge per dwelling is a much fairer way to calculate municipal policing costs.***

**Composition of District Council** – District Council is currently made up of 12 Town District Councillors (4 from Bracebridge, Gravenhurst and Huntsville) and 10 Township District Councillors (Township of Muskoka Lakes, Lake of Bays and Georgian Bay). It has become apparent that when an issue arises that divides the Towns and Townships, that the resulting vote will always favour the Towns; as occurred in the vote regarding the new policing costing model. At the April 18<sup>th</sup> District Council meeting, the Clerk presented council with a detailed report on the history of District Council, area and regional representation and the process details and financial considerations regarding initiating a change in District Council's composition. Council will be exploring what the correct number for equal representation around the District Council table is. At this meeting, there was support to reduce District Council to 12; 2 councillors from each Town and Township. The report can be found [here](#). Council also agreed that a staff report was needed to review how the District Chair is elected; perhaps a change is needed there as well. District CAO Michael Duben agreed to have a report prepared for the May Council meeting. ***The MLA supports a review of District Council's composition and looks forward to the on-going discussions on this topic.***

**Resolution regarding Flooding in Muskoka** – Also at the April council meeting, District Council voted unanimously to support a motion, put forward by Township of Muskoka Lakes District Councillor Phil Harding and Gravenhurst Mayor Paisley Donaldson, that the District request the Province to initiate a full review of the 'Muskoka River Water Management Plan' (MRWMP). Councillor Harding presented several images of property damage experienced by TML property owners due to the high water flooding/ice this spring. Councillor Harding also highlighted several environmental concerns such as submerged gas pumps and flooded septic beds. The resolution asks that the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry identify the physical constraints in the watershed and study the need to draw-down the water levels during the winter months. The news story can be found [here](#). ***The MLA applauds District Council for***

***supporting a much needed review of the MRWMP. The MLA has had weekly discussions and updates with senior District of Muskoka officials on our on-going progress in order to get our 3 point action plan accepted and executed.***

Discussion of Commercial Flights at Muskoka Airport – Muskoka tourism group Explorers Edge has proposed a plan to bring regular passenger flights into Gravenhurst. The District of Muskoka owns the airport lands and has stated that in order to provide this level of service a Canadian Air Transport Security Authority (CATSA) designation needs to be in place. CATSA is mandated with protecting the public through effective and efficient screening of air travellers and their baggage. Public meetings were held mid-April to see if there was support from local area business, motels and resorts. The runway was repaved last summer and can handle more and larger planes. If this plan is successful, additional flights could start arriving as early as July 2017. The news story can be found [here](#). See CTV Barrie news video [here](#). ***The MLA thinks that increased visitors via air travel will help promote tourism and economic development in Muskoka. In addition, passenger flights will provide an alternative to those cottagers who would prefer shorter travel times to the cottage on weekends.***

Proposed Central Ontario Alliance - On April 18<sup>th</sup> District Chair John Klinck asked District councillors if they would support continued conversations with neighbouring communities to create a proposed central Ontario alliance. Muskoka's northern designation was removed years ago. However a few years ago Muskoka was invited to be included in the Eastern Ontario Economic Development region. But as the District Chair pointed out, Muskoka has more in common with those areas in central Ontario (areas like Barrie and Simcoe County) than those in eastern Ontario. Chair Klinck stated "As time has progressed, there has been a shift in alliances. We need to look at the benefits of changing our alliance as it relates to Federal government funding." Council voted unanimously to authorize the District Chair and Muskoka Mayors to engage neighbouring municipalities in discussions surrounding the concept of establishing 'Central Ontario' as a prosperous market area and brand in the eyes of the Provincial and Federal governments. The local news story can be found [here](#). ***The MLA applauds the initiative to group with neighbouring towns that have common concerns and issues in order to create a new central designation for government funding.***

-----To view the District's Council April Newsletter, or sign up for their newsletters, see [here](#).

## **TOWN OF BRACEBRIDGE**

New Transit System for Bracebridge – Director of Bracebridge Public Works, Walt Schmid announced a month ago that he is working on establishing a new transit system for Bracebridge. According to the local news story, "Schmid said they are looking at a conventional bus system that will be accessible to all people, including those in wheelchairs. There will also be a specialty transit service, specifically for people with disabilities; that will follow in stage two of the process." The system is estimated to cost close to \$300,000 annually. This new service will cost taxpayers money even with revenue from the province, transit fees, bus ads, etc. The Town's request for bids ended April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2016. To read the full news story and find out the proposed route see [here](#). ***The MLA congratulates the Town of Bracebridge on moving forward to providing this important service to its residents.***

'Santa's Village Trolley' Service discontinued – Bracebridge's iconic 'Santa's Village Trolley' will no longer be in use. In the past couple of years the costs to run and maintain the trolley have proven to be expensive. The trolley is a 1988 model with a high number of kilometres and although the body has been redone, it is the mechanical side that is a cause for concern. The trolley is at a period in its lifecycle that it can either be replaced at a significant capital cost of about \$300,000 or continue to fixed and repaired as mechanical issues arise. The town has been providing funding to the trolley annually. According to Jamie Hopkins, general manager of Santa's Village, since the Town of Bracebridge recognized they needed to put emphasis into a real transit service, the Santa's Village trolley that traditionally runs throughout the summer months will come to a halt. The full news story is [here](#). ***The MLA is sad to see the end of the trolley but hopes that it can be repurposed for specific community events.***

## **TOWN OF GRAVENHURST**

Update from Gravenhurst's recent Public Meeting on the new Official Plan (OP) - Gravenhurst held another public meeting on Saturday April 30<sup>th</sup> to receive input regarding their Official Plan draft documents. Over 60 people attended the meeting with 10 delegations from a variety of year-round residents, including several Gravenhurst lake associations. The Muskoka Lakes Association (MLA) presented a 10 minute PowerPoint presentation which highlights specific planning principles and concepts important to our association. The MLA has been meeting with various Gravenhurst lake associations to discuss the draft OP documents and to encourage the lake associations to add their input into the OP. ***The MLA's PowerPoint presentation can be found [here](#). The MLA was pleased to have an opportunity to submit our views on Gravenhurst's Official Plan. The MLA was also pleased to see so many other lake associations delegate and concur with MLA's views.***

Taboo Resort's new Development Plan – On Saturday, April 23<sup>rd</sup> an open house was held by Taboo Resort to show the public their new development plans. In 2014 a portion of the main hotel building was damaged by fire, which resulted in the demolition of the entire building. Taboo is now planning to build two new separate buildings with a total of 108 self-contained units. The new development would be in the same general area as the original building that was demolished. Taboo's Managing Director Nigel Hollidge, along with the resort's architects, was before council on April 26<sup>th</sup> requesting site plan approval; which Council unanimously approved. Construction is scheduled to begin this summer. The site plan can be found [here](#). ***The MLA looks forward to seeing Taboo's new marketing plans.***

New Proposed Development Plans for the Muskoka Wharf area – On April 26<sup>th</sup>, the council chambers were crowded with residents wishing to comment on the proposed plans for a new condo apartment building and ten townhouses at the Muskoka Wharf. Currently two condo apartment buildings exist on the site (the yellow and blue buildings). The public expected that a third apartment building would be built according to the original Master Plan agreement between the Town and Evanco (developer). However Evanco is in negotiations to sell the development rights of this project to J.D. Developments and the final ownership is not yet confirmed. The lands are currently owned by the Town of Gravenhurst, but an Agreement of Purchase and Sale exists between the applicant and the Town. The delegates at this public meeting expressed their concerns with the new plan proposed. Concerns included increased density, lack of sufficient parking and green space, deviation from the Master Plan and issues regarding future condo owners' use of the boat slips in the area. Council unanimously agreed to defer this application. Planning maps can be found [here](#) and [here](#). ***The MLA will continue to follow this application.***

New By-law for the Glen Echo Boat Launch – This contentious issue has been on-going for the past four years. Concerns include contractors using the site to do business as opposed to using the landing as a launch ramp for access to cottage properties, congestion at the public ramp due to increased number of users, insufficient parking and elevated early weekend noise levels. The Town unanimously passed a by-law at the April 26<sup>th</sup> council meeting which addresses the above issues from a safety concern. While dealing with the issues at the launch ramp, the Town contracted to have the municipal launch area surveyed and discovered encroachments on both sides of the ramp area by the abutting neighbours. The Town will address the encroachment issue and the issue of parking at a future date. The new by-law can be found on the April 26<sup>th</sup> council planning agenda [here](#). ***The MLA is pleased that the safety issues are being addressed by the new by-law but hope the parking issues will also be addressed as soon as possible.***

## **SEGUIN TOWNSHIP**

Susan Adams is the new Ward 4 Councillor – On April 25<sup>th</sup>, Susan Adams was elected Seguin Council's new Ward 4 councillor by a huge majority of voters; winning 310 of the 420 votes cast. Adams is no stranger to Seguin Township government. From 2006 to 2010, she was the councillor for Ward 3, which includes the village of Humphrey. She has remained involved with the township, including being chair of the township's Committee of Adjustment. During her campaign, Adams made it clear that her three primary priorities are the environment, value for the ratepayers' tax dollar and sensible economic growth. Adams fills the vacancy left by Councillor Doug Sainsbury who resigned from

Council this January and sadly passed away March 2<sup>nd</sup>. For more information see [here](#). ***The MLA congratulates Susan and wishes her much success in her new position. Councillor Adam's priorities appear to be well aligned with MLA priorities.***

Seguin Township's 2016 Operating and Capital and Operating Budgets – Councillor Jack Hepworth states, in his latest council and community report of May 2<sup>nd</sup>, that staff now recommends Council approve the final 2016 Operating and Capital Budgets. From the CFO's staff report – "The effective 2016 tax rate increase, originally planned for 2.0%, has been reduced to 1.5%, as per the request of Council. Overall, this Budget proposes a 2016 Municipal Tax Rate of .350224%; with the Provincial Education tax rate of .188%, the combined 2016 Residential tax rate will be 0.538224%, compared to 0.546688 in 2015. **What does this mean for our ratepayers?** In 2016, the total average residential property taxes will increase by .34% compared to 2015, or \$8.26 on the average residential property tax bill." ***The MLA is once again impressed with Seguin's continuing dedication to fiscal responsibility on behalf of its residents.***

Relocation of the Rosseau Library is hotly debated – Moving the Rosseau Library, which is currently housed in the basement of the Rosseau Memorial Hall, to the Ruth Dare Health Centre location is a contentious issue in the community. The Seguin library board first suggested the move in March based on costs required to bring it up to the province's accessibility standards. At that time, Council requested staff prepare a report on the feasibility of a move. At the April 18<sup>th</sup> Council meeting staff reported that the township's 2016 budget, approved in principle, doesn't include funding for relocating the library and any possible changes to the health centre. After much debate, Councillor Jack Hepworth suggested that further investigation was needed and that a May 2<sup>nd</sup> public meeting be held to allow all parties to be heard. According to a local news story, Councillor Hepworth said "The reason these people are here (indicating the audience) is because they want to be consulted, and in all your homework you have basically looked after the technical aspect to assess whether the Ruth Dare can receive the library. People in Rosseau have long memories and they like the facilities they use." The full news story can be found [here](#). ***The MLA acknowledges and applauds the extra steps that Seguin Council is doing to hear the concerns of all those interested parties.***

Councillor Hepworth's full Council and Community Report dated May 2<sup>nd</sup> can be found [here](#).

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

Resolution regarding Flooding/Ice Damage in TML – At the April 15<sup>th</sup> council meeting, Councillor Phil Harding brought forward a resolution that TML request the Province to initiate a full review of the 'Muskoka River Water Management Plan' and to ask the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry to identify the physical constraints in the watershed and study the need to draw-down the water levels during the winter months. Council unanimously supported the resolution, which was then forwarded to, and also unanimously supported by, District Council the following Monday, April 18<sup>th</sup>; referenced above under District of Muskoka. ***The MLA's Water Level Task Force has met with Councillor Harding to see how best we can work together to accomplish our similar requests from the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. The MLA invited Councillor Harding to a meeting with the District of Muskoka Chair last week to jointly discuss our combined action plan on the flood. The good news is that we all share the same goal....to reduce the likelihood of future spring flooding in Muskoka.***

Update on Cove Marina, Foot's Bay – Cove Marina's application to expand its docks was discussed at the April 15<sup>th</sup> council meeting where it was given 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> reading approval. Third reading was delayed in order to give the Cove Marina owners and the neighbours an opportunity for further discussion to hopefully reach a compromise; and thus avoid an OMB appeal. A special council meeting was held May 4<sup>th</sup> to see if a compromise had occurred. Although both sides did make some compromises the final boat slip count remained an issue; a difference of 8 boat slips. Council agreed that the overall plan was more important than the number of boat slips and proceeded to draft minor amendments to the by-law. These included limiting dock length to 72.1 metres from the original 90 metres and adding a Hold Zone on the development of one of the docks until all required government approvals were obtained. The amendment passed on a vote of 5 to 3.

Councillor Sandy Currie requested a recorded vote on 3<sup>rd</sup> reading. The vote was 4 to 4 with Mayor Don Furniss and Councillors Gault McTaggart, Allen Edwards and Phil Harding in favour of approving the application and Councillors Sandy Currie, Ruth Nishikawa, Linda Barrick-Spearn and Donelda Kruckel opposed. Thus the resolution was defeated and approval was not given. Unfortunately no discussion was held to allow the previous floating docks to be re-installed. Therefore those floating docks will not be available this summer to the island cottagers who used them in the past and they will have to seek mainland dockage elsewhere. ***The MLA wrote a letter on this issue for the April 15<sup>th</sup> council meeting citing concerns of extended dock length, boat traffic congestion, boat safety and issues over precedence-setting and waterfront character. It is disappointing that compromise could not be reached, or that a temporary by-law was not issued to allow summer dockage for island cottagers. The MLA letter can be found [here](#).***

Peninsula Road's new Speed Limits – District Council has approved revised speed limits along Muskoka Road 7/Peninsula Road in the Township of Muskoka Lakes. The changes will reduce the number of speed limit transitions on the road by making the following changes to posted limits along Peninsula Road:

- All 60 km/h portions of the road will be raised to 70 km/h
- All 80 km/h sections will be lowered to 70 km/h

These changes are planned to come into effect before the May long weekend. Radar Speed Advisory signs will be installed to let motorists know when they are transitioning into an area with a lower speed limit. ***The MLA appreciates this issue being brought to the District's attention by TML Councillor Phil Harding. Road safety is of prime importance at all times, especially on those roads whose volume increases dramatically during the summer months.***

Council passes ATV By-law - Council unanimously passed a by-law on April 15<sup>th</sup> that allows All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs), Off-road Recreational Vehicles (ORVs), and Utility Task Vehicles (UTVs) to travel on all township roads. This by-law will be in effect for one year as this is essentially a test to see the effects of allowing these vehicles use of municipal roads in TML. Inspector Ed Medved, OPP Bracebridge detachment, was present at the meeting and assured councillors that the rules and regulations surrounding these vehicles are regulated under the Highway Traffic Act; i.e. all these types of vehicles must be licensed and insured. ***The MLA recommends any ATV, ORV or UTV owner should educate themselves on the use of these vehicles as it relates to the Highway Traffic Act. The link found [here](#) is helpful.***

New location for the Bala Farmer's Market – Council passed a resolution on April 14<sup>th</sup> stating the new summer home for the Bala Farmer's Market will be Jaspens Park in Bala. The Farmer's Market will continue to be held every Monday starting June 20<sup>th</sup> to August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2016 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Port Carling Large Lock Open for the Season – The Port Carling large lock is now operating for the season (until the last Friday in November 2016). The spring hours are:

- Monday through Friday – 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
- Saturday and Sunday – 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
- Summer hours will begin on the second Monday in June.

For more information about rules and regulations, summer hours of operations and 2016 fees, please visit [here](#). You can also subscribe to receive notices on District roads and other programs and services [here](#) or follow on Twitter: [@districtmuskoka](#).

### **NEWS RE BALA FALLS –**

Last month the Muskoka Lakes Association met with Save the Bala Falls to discuss any issues that may still be on-going concerning the proposed Swift River Energy Ltd. hydro plant in Bala. For information on the safety issues identified by Save the Bala Falls, please visit <http://savethebalafalls.com/> The MLA agrees that there are still many safety issues that need to be addressed. The MLA has sent a letter of our concerns to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry and the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change.

The MLA letter to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry can be found [here](#).

The MLA letter to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change can be found [here](#).

*Note -The opinions and/or views expressed on the SaveTheBalaFalls.com website and its social media platforms, including, but not limited to, the website, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages, represent the thoughts of SaveTheBalaFalls.com, its members and active community, and are not necessarily those of the MLA.*

First Annual Muskoka Lakes Wild Leek Festival from May 19th to 29th

“The Leeky Bowl” soup contest will be held on Saturday, May 28th, 2016  
from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Port Carling Community Centre.  
For more information see here: <http://www.muskokawildleekfestival.ca/>

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