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December 20, 2017

The Chair and Members of Council of the District Municipality of Muskoka and  
The Chair and Members of the Planning and Economic Development Committee  
70 Pine Street  
Bracebridge, ON  
Canada, P1L 1N3

Dear Sirs/Mesdames:

**Re: District Official Plan Policies Review – Resort Village of Minett**

I am writing to you as a concerned citizen and ratepayer regarding the review of the District of Muskoka's Official Plan.

This Official Plan review has been underway for many months and is entering its final phases. I just became aware in the past few days that this process is not an amendment to the OP but the approval of a complete new one

Yet, the District has failed to address a significant section in that plan, namely Section I5.3, Resort Village of Minett.

**Section 26 of the Planning Act requires the Council to revise the plan within ten years. My understanding of the required Official Plan review, as mandated by the Planning Act, is that the entire plan should be under review. However, the District has chosen not to review the sections related to Minett, in the Township of Muskoka Lakes.**

**Section 3 (5) of the Planning Act mandates that a decision of the council of a municipality, in respect of the exercise of any authority that affects a planning matter shall be consistent with the policy statements that are in effect on the date of the decision.**

In fact, the District is approving a new Official Plan and the Minett sections are being approved without having been the subject of a review. It is not a case of carrying forward the existing sections, as we were led to believe, but rather the sections are being approved again.

**I request that the District directs its planning staff to immediately carry out a careful review of the policies regarding Minett as part of the District Plan review. This review should also involve the public.**

The Minett sections were added to the District Official Plan as an Official Plan Amendment #31. This OPA was adopted by District Council on May 7, 2007 with an effective date of January 28, 2008. **As of this date, the Township's Zoning Bylaw has not been amended to reflect OP changes and no development has been applied for or approved by the Township.**

A large percentage of the taxpayers in the Township and District oppose the provisions in that section of the Official Plan and are at a loss as to why it has not been part of the review process. They do not understand why an already sensitive bay should be subjected to what can only be called an urban like residential subdivision of over 3000 homes/cottages.

Times have changed, environmental requirements have changed and most residents of Minett and surrounding areas believe that this development is not in the best interests of the residents and taxpayers of the Township or the District of Muskoka.

**Section 26 of the Planning Act also requires that Council shall revise the official plan as required to ensure that it conforms with provincial plans, has regard to matters of provincial interest and is consistent with provincial policy statements (PPS).**

When the Minett sections were added ten years ago, they were required to be consistent with the PPS 2005 that were in effect. Now PPS 2014 are in effect and Council has a duty to ensure that the Minett sections are also consistent with the new and updated policies.

There are many important changes in PPS 2014 such as Climate Change, Natural Heritage, Wetlands and Water, Intensification as well as others that apply to Minett. These should be reviewed and appropriate revisions made before adopting the Official Plan.

The Minett lands are designated as waterfront resort commercial and have the same potential use issues that are now being reviewed for the Villas of Lake Muskoka, Touchstone and Legacy cottages. Namely that commercial use is being interpreted as only requiring a unit to be in a rental pool for eight weeks and only two of those in the summer season. This is because the plan does not define tourist commercial use and it should.

In addition, the Minett sections allow up to 50% of the units to be fully residential. Yet a unit is not defined and is being interpreted as a 500 sq. ft. hotel room allows a 4000 sq. ft. cottage. The term "unit" should be defined to clarify the meaning. The PPS 2014 directs most of the residential development to urban centers, yet Minett, which is not an urban center, is permitted to create over 1500 residential units.

**Minett is likely the largest resort development in the history of the District and it will have an enormous impact on the area environmentally, socially and in many other ways. It is currently approved for over 3000 units and being on Lake Rosseau, has the potential to have a serious negative impact on the quality of a waterbody that is already challenged.**

**Now is the time to review the Minett section and recommend changes before zoning is put in place and building approvals are applied for.**

**Section 26 (2.5) of the Planning Act provides that Council shall have regard to any written submissions about what revisions may be required (to the official plan).**

I suggest that Council revise the Minett sections to reduce the density on the waterfront lands significantly to protect the environment and water quality and recreational enjoyment. I further request that Council revise the Minett sections to ensure that the lands are operated as a commercial resort and not permit residential use. I also suggest that the key terms used in the Minett section be defined to make the intent clear

I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss these issues with you in more detail, as a delegation to Council, before you approve the revised Muskoka Official Plan. This plan is a long term document and should not be rushed.

I am attaching a letter dated December 20, 2017 from the law firm, Goodmans, who act for the Friends of Minett, also requesting that the District carry out a careful review of the official plan policies regarding Minett.

In closing, I am asking that the Committee, today, pass the following resolution:

“ WHEREAS Section 26 of the Planning Act requires a review of the entire official plan and WHEREAS Section 3(5) of the Planning Act mandates that a decision of Council be consistent with the Provincial Policy Statements that are in effect on the date of the decision, staff are hereby directed to include Section I5.3, Resort Village of Minett, in the ongoing Official Plan review and make the necessary revisions in the next draft of the Official Plan to ensure that those sections comply with section 26(1) of the Planning Act.”

Regards



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cc: Summer Valentine  
encl: Goodmans letter, December 20, 2017