

Welcome to the April 2017 issue of MLA NewsBites –



**Spring has arrived and it's time to open up the cottage!** – The

MLA hopes you find your property in good working order after a long winter. If you haven't visited your property before now, the MLA recommends you do so. According to the MLA Flood Watch email last Friday: "The Spring Freshet is not over. Levels are again at or above spring high and projected to rise significantly again. Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry has issued a 'flood warning' for the entire Muskoka River watershed. Members are advised to act to mitigate damage from submergence and wave action. If travelling by boat, go slow to avoid adding wake damage to already fragile shorelines and waterfront structures. Care is also advised to avoid floating debris." Please ensure that your boathouse items are elevated and safe.

**Reminder: MLA Yearbook and Seedling Day Pick-Up** – A reminder that you can pick up your MLA Yearbook and any seedlings you ordered on Saturday, May 20<sup>th</sup> at the Port Carling Community Centre from 9 a.m. to noon. The MLA's annual water testing training will begin at 9 a.m. in the Community Centre. Once again, the MLA thanks all those who have agreed to volunteer their time to do water testing this summer. Your participation in helping to preserve the Muskoka Lakes is very much appreciated. MLA's board of directors looks forward to seeing you on the 20<sup>th</sup>.

**DISTRICT OF Muskoka**

**Update on District's Official Plan (OP)**- District planning staff presented a revised draft of proposed Official Plan policies to District Council mid-April. Having consulted with all six area municipalities, the development community, resort owners, lake associations and area residents, District staff were able to present a revised version of the original document. The draft does not contain specific wording but instead presents land use policy guidelines. This is a high-level document which will allow for interpretation at the municipal level. District Council agreed to receive the document. This is only completion of Phase 2 of the process. District staff will be continuing to consult with the public during the summer months with the hope that the final OP will be adopted by District Council in the fall.

The full 113 page revised document can be found [here](#). An overview of the 40 revised Official Plan directional policies can be found [here](#).

The MLA submitted a variety of comments regarding the policies and is pleased that District staff has incorporated many of our suggestions. ***Of particular interest to the MLA is District's decision to delete the provision for secondary dwelling units on the waterfront. Over the last few years, the MLA has consistently objected to this proposed policy which would allow for increased density on the waterfront. The MLA very much appreciates the District's support to remove this proposed policy.***

District staff received many submissions and suggestions specifically on the resort industry policies. The current OP requires resorts to be 100% commercial. District wishes to continue to support the resort industry in Muskoka and has proposed that as much as 50% of a resort can be residential but the remaining 50% must have a commercial component. Several resort owners feel this is too onerous a policy and have requested that as much as 100% of a new resort be residential in nature. ***The MLA has several concerns and intends to present these concerns as part of our ongoing dialogue with the District, at the Planning and Economic Development committee meeting on May 18<sup>th</sup>.***

**Update on District's Official Plan re Lake Health System** –Part of the District's Official Plan contains policies dedicated to preserving healthy lakes and rivers. ***The District has been reviewing their current policies and is***

***proposing some major changes.*** Last October, the District of Muskoka held a statutory meeting to receive public comment regarding the proposed changes. The MLA, along with several other lake associations, attended and expressed concern that ***the classification of lakes will be eliminated.*** Local municipalities will be expected to undertake best management practices, being site plan control approval, on development of all waterfront properties when the District's new policy comes into effect. By the end of January this year, District staff had collected additional comments from the majority of active participants in this discussion. The District is awaiting comments from the province. Once staff receives the province's comments, they will make any necessary revisions to the policy and present the revised document to the Planning and Economic Development committee again. ***The MLA has been an active participant in this process and along with other concerned lake associations has submitted our comments to District staff. This has been a long process and we do not know when the revisions will be presented or when the revised policy will take effect. In the meantime, we are unable to provide clarity as to the District's actions with an application for development on a currently classified over-threshold lake.***

**Water & Sewer Plant Capacities Summary** – District staff has completed a summary of all Muskoka urban area water and sewer plant capacities; both current capacities and the year when expected upgrades will be needed. The District has completed a municipal water & sewer summary sheet which breaks out the existing users of the plant as well as anticipated users. Anticipated users include those developments not yet built but which have planning approval. As stated in the staff report: "These development tracking tables show that the sewage treatment plants in Huntsville, Gravenhurst and Bala would be nearing maximum capacity if all the development that could currently obtain a building permit within these Urban Centres were to actually build out as approved. In addition, when all vacant properties with partial planning approvals but no servicing commitments are taken into consideration, both the sewage and water treatment plants would require expansions in Huntsville, Bracebridge and Port Carling. However, it is important to note that the likelihood of all properties actually building out in the short term is very low." A table summarizing the results for each Urban Centre can be found in Appendix II on page 9 of the staff report, found [here](#).

"It has become clear that an update to the approach to capacity allocation is required to better address infrastructure, asset and growth management-related matters. In order to streamline the process and to ensure a consistent approach, a District-wide Water and Sewage Capacity Allocation Strategy is being recommended." Strategies being proposed include: (1) Revised timing of Environmental Assessments; (2) Review of capacity allocations; (3) Timing of Development Charges; (4) Establishing sunset clauses in Servicing Agreements; (5) Ensuring that Holding zone provisions are in place and lifted only when a servicing agreement is reached with the District; (6) Closure of inactive of subdivision and condominium files and (7) Regularly updating the tracking schedules. ***The MLA was surprised to learn that there are approximately 28 approved subdivision files in Muskoka with approvals given more than 10 years ago. These developers have made little, or no progress, in fulfilling their conditions of draft approval in order to obtain building permits. The MLA is pleased the District is reviewing its urban area water and sewer capacities to ensure that non-active applications are not creating a false sense of development.***

**New GIS Mapping** – Graham Good, District Manager of Geomatics and his staff have been busy updating and providing more interactive programs on the District's geographic information system (GIS) mapping system. This open data catalogue allows for public accessibility to GIS data managed by the District. The District currently has 78 unique maps; each map having several layers. These maps are used by District Planning, Public Works, Building and Tax departments, as well as area property owners. TML, Huntsville, Bracebridge and Gravenhurst residents can use these District maps to access their particular property's zoning information. Each individual property shows the property's civic address, its zoning and gives a link to the local area zoning by-laws which relate to that property. District feedback indicates that realtors, lawyers and seasonal residents are all accessing and using this information. Graham is now working with Lake of Bays and Georgian Bay planning staff to have

their zoning maps completed. Last December new PDF maps were available to the public which included transit mapping and water quality mapping.

Graham's latest project is replacing 2013 Muskoka air photos with 2018 photos. He is using these photos to zoom in on each property to see each building's footprint, with the end result being able to map 100,000 buildings in Muskoka. Once finished, he will distribute the maps to each area municipality. These maps will be very helpful in identifying D-4 zones (hazardous waste sites) and will also help planning and public works departments. In addition, staff is also currently working on mapping vacant land and proposed condo developments. This will enable viewers to see condo developments fully planned out like a site plan. Each vacant site will have a unique roll # and civic address. You can access the site [here](#). ***The MLA encourages you to invest a few minutes reviewing this impressive site. The maps provide an incredibly detailed amount of information about individual properties and by-laws and are accessible 24/7. This is a valuable tool for both seasonal and year-round residents.***

**District Council votes against hiring TML Integrity Commissioner Robert Swayze** –Over the last couple of months District Council has discussed and debated hiring an Integrity Commissioner. Since the District's Code of Conduct was passed in 2014, there have been no formal complaints regarding the conduct of any council member. Mr. Swayze has been the Integrity Commissioner for the Township of Muskoka Lakes since 2015. At April's District Council meeting council voted not to hire Mr. Swayze. ***The MLA was present at the Township of Muskoka Lakes when Mr. Swayze presented his report to council on some formal complaints that were referred to him. The MLA was unimpressed with his analysis at that time.***

## **TOWN OF GRAVENHURST**

**The Province does NOT accept the Town's Initial Purchase Offer for the Muskoka Regional Centre lands** – Last October Gravenhurst council approved 'in concept' a master plan presented by China Maple Leaf Educational System Ltd. They, along with Knightstone Capital Management Inc., proposed to partner with the Town to acquire the Muskoka Regional Centre property from Infrastructure Ontario to build a Chinese-Canadian boarding school on the site. The Town signed a partnership agreement with China Maple Leaf Education System and Knightstone Capital on February 28<sup>th</sup>. The developer proposed to finance the entire project. According to the Town, the development is speculated to create 200 local construction jobs and another 200 plus permanent employment opportunities when the school opens in fall 2019. However the province has rejected Gravenhurst's initial purchase offer for these provincially owned lands. In a recent local article, Gravenhurst's CAO Glen Davies stated "Currently the town has the exclusive right to purchase the property." However "he isn't sure how long Infrastructure Ontario will maintain that position, but hopes they will commit to a three-month extension." The local news article can be found [here](#). Gravenhurst Council was to discuss whether to proceed further during a closed session meeting on April 25<sup>th</sup>. ***The MLA is preparing a letter to the Town requesting that no taxpayer funds be used for this project and there be no financial liability to the Town and its taxpayers.***

## **SEGUIN TOWNSHIP**

**Councillor Jack Hepworth's May 1<sup>st</sup> Report** –Once again Seguin Township council proves you can approve a budget that results in **decreased taxes for 2017!** Council approved the 2017 Operating Budget of \$14,917,674 and the 2017 Capital Budget of \$3,242,409. In 2017 the total average residential property taxes **will decrease by .44% compared to 2016.** This equates to a savings of \$10.71 on the average residential property tax bill. ***Well done Seguin Council!!!!***

In addition, Councillor Hepworth states that Seguin's Canada 150 Celebration will be held on Friday, June 20<sup>th</sup> from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the Rosseau Waterfront. It will be held in conjunction with the yearly Family Night. More information will be provided at a later date. ***The MLA thanks Councillor Hepworth for all the good news!***

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

**OMB Settlement re Cove Marina** - The OMB hearing on Cove Marina was held April 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>. TML went to the hearing with a settlement proposal. The OMB Chair has ruled that:

1. The maximum length of docks is 295 feet.
2. There will be a minimum of 124 parking spaces, including tandem parking spaces.
3. A maximum of 54 leasable boat slips. A leasable boat slip shall mean a boat slip subject to a long-term rental agreement.
4. Boat slips used for the purpose of accessing a water access only property must provide on-land parking spaces in accordance with the zoning by-law and are not eligible for the reduction that allows 33% of those parking spaces to be provided by the parking of boats.

***The MLA is pleased that there is a settlement agreement between the parties to allow development at Cove Marina. The MLA is also pleased that the OMB Chair recognized the need for designated leasable boat slips and on-land parking for those needing access to their island properties.***

**Update on Reef Island Development Proposal and new OMB Regulation-** In March TML Council voted 9 to 1 to refuse a planning application that would permit two dwelling units on one waterfront lot, as well as permission for additional boathouses and docks within 100 feet of an environmental protection zone on Reef Island. The MLA wrote to TML requesting that this application be refused and was pleased when council voted to uphold their policies. The applicant then appealed the decision to the OMB. Prior to the OMB initiating a hearing, TML council entered into dispute resolution process to try to settle the issues. However the MLA was not notified of this action to try to settle even though the MLA had provided comment. The MLA has learned that new regulations now allow the township to defer sending the appeal to the OMB if attempting to work out a settlement. Settlement discussions can proceed without any other parties being notified. TML did reach a settlement with the applicant and has sent the settlement details to the OMB. The MLA has been listed as “interested” on the file. When the OMB chairman considers the appeal, the MLA hopes to be in attendance before the chair signs off on the settlement. ***The MLA cautions all who become involved in planning application disputes to make sure you indicate on your submissions to council that you wish to be kept informed of any progress or settlement discussions. The MLA will inform you of the OMB Chair’s decision on the Reef Island issue when it is made available.***

**Council Upholds Their By-laws** – A recent application before council requested that two separate lots (one small waterfront lot and one large backlot) owned by one owner be considered one lot in order to allow the owner to build a dock and one-story boathouse on the small waterfront lot. The rural backlot is considered a building lot but the waterfront lot is not as it is undersized. Therefore there is no development potential on the waterfront lot. In the fall of 2016 the Township received several complaints on the waterfront lot related to tree removal at the shoreline and the construction of a shed and sundeck that was not in compliance with the Zoning By-law. A review of municipal records determined that no building permit was obtained for either the shed or sundeck and both structures do not comply with the Zoning By-law. A number of residents in the vicinity objected to this application and pointed out that the waterfront property is located quite a distance from the owner’s residence; certainly not within walking distance. Council refused the application because they were reluctant to approve the building of any structures (example: boathouse, dock) on an unbuildable waterfront parcel of land. Normally the waterfront portion of the lot is actually part of the lot, but in this case the waterfront remnant is a considerable distance from the main dwelling. ***The MLA applauds township council for upholding their zoning by-law requirements.***

**TML Reduces Winter Road Salt** - Director of Public Works Roger Young announced some recent changes to the amount of road salt that TML is putting down on Township roads during winter maintenance activities. Sodium Chloride is blended within the Township's sand stockpile to ensure the sand remains loose and unfrozen during winter months. Following a very detailed review of salt/sand practices across the province, road salt will be reduced from 3% of the sand volume to 1.75% within the Township's stockpile. This change results in a reduction of approximately 125 tonnes of salt used annually. The applied salt within the sand has to go somewhere. After it dissolves it gets carried away via runoff and deposited into both surface water (streams, lakes and rivers) and the groundwater under our feet. In 2004, Canada categorized road salt as a toxin and placed new guidelines on its use. Road salt is the cause of increasing sodium chloride in watersheds. High levels of sodium chloride are harmful to most freshwater aquatic organisms, can reduce water circulation in lakes and rivers and can interfere with a body of water's natural chemistry. Road salt can also dehydrate and kill trees and plants growing next to roadways. In some cases, dried salt crystals can attract deer and moose to busy roads, increasing their chance of becoming roadkill. ***The MLA applauds TML on taking proactive measures to reduce the amount of road salt to help protect and preserve Muskoka's unique wildlife and watershed.***

**Council Requests Help from the Province to Reduce Spring Flooding** - During the spring of 2013, the Township of Muskoka Lakes experienced severe flooding causing significant damage to municipal infrastructure and personal property. In the spring of 2016, Muskoka again experienced water levels similar to those seen during the 2013 "hundred year flood". On March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2016 TML Council sent a request to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry encouraging the Ministry to review the Muskoka River Watershed Management Plan (MRWMP). The Ministry sent back correspondence stating that the scheduled review of the MRWMP had been deferred to 2021. Now in 2017, significant flooding is again threatening the Township of Muskoka Lakes. At the March council meeting, council voted to send a letter to the Province of Ontario encouraging them, through the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, to initiate both short and long term actions that will address the issues Muskoka residents have faced in recent years due to unprecedented flooding. Council also requested that an immediate Provincial review of the Muskoka River Water Management Plan be initiated. ***The MLA has been working diligently over the last year to achieve both short and long term solutions to Muskoka's water level problems. We remain engaged in discussions with MNR. The MLA is very appreciative of the support from TML council in this regard.***

**Port Carling Bridge Construction** – The Port Carling bridge will be reduced to one lane from April to July for bridge maintenance. The Segwun and the Wenonah cruise ships have been notified that the bridge will not be open for passage until the necessary repairs are completed.

**50 SHADES OF GREEN'**  
**MUSKOKA STEWARDSHIP CONFERENCE**  
**FRIDAY, MAY 12<sup>TH</sup>, 2017 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.**  
**Port Carling Community Centre**

***'50 Shades of Green': All about Algae is the focus of the 2017 Muskoka Stewardship Conference. It's an opportunity to learn all about algae including algal dynamics and trends, report algae blooms, monitoring algae and more. For more information and registration, visit [www.muskokawatershed.org](http://www.muskokawatershed.org)***