

Welcome to the May 2017 issue of MLA NewsBites –



The MLA hopes you have had the opportunity to open up your cottage and have found everything in order. For those unable to pick up their MLA Yearbook on May 20th, we remind you that the MLA office is open Monday to Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and on Saturdays from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. in July and August with staff happy to help you.

This summer is shaping up to be a busy one, so please reserve the following dates for our **key MLA events -**

1. **Friday, July 28th**- MLA Annual General Meeting (AGM), 6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the Port Carling Community Centre
2. **Saturday, August 5th** -MLA Aquatic Regatta with a new format, starts at 9:30 a.m. at Muskoka Lakes Golf & Country Club. Details [here](#).
3. **Sunday, August 6th** – MLA Sailing Regatta, 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Beaumaris Yacht Club. Details [here](#).

Note – MLA 2017 Event Schedule can be found [here](#).

DISTRICT OF MUSKOKA

Update on District's New Proposed Official Plan (OP) – District planning staff have completed a first draft of the District of Muskoka's new Official Plan, which sets out development guidelines and restrictions for the next 10 years (it was presented to District's Planning and Economic Development committee on May 18th) The draft provides direction to the local municipalities while allowing them flexibility in how to implement these policies. There are two areas of key concern to MLA members: growth management and resort policies.

The MLA has been an active participant in offering policy recommendations. We are pleased that the draft plan incorporates many of our ideas, including requiring that new development be of appropriate 'scope and scale' to adjacent surrounding structures.

Two Open Houses are scheduled to allow you to review these draft policies: July 15th and August 17th. The final opportunity for the public to speak about this new OP will be at the Statutory Public Meeting on August 29th. After this meeting, the draft OP goes to District Council for adoption and then on to the Province for comments and approval.

The MLA spoke at the May 18th meeting to restate our serious concerns with the proposed deregulation of planning policies related to "resorts". We are particularly concerned about the proposal to compromise the "tourist" nature of Muskoka resorts by allowing up to 50% of the units at new resort developments to be residential – i.e. full-time privately owned. We feel strongly that such developments would quickly cease to be "resorts" at all, and would basically become high-density, multi-unit waterfront developments; which traditional Muskoka policies have discouraged. We believe such a step would lead to rapid intensification of Muskoka's waterfront and do irreparable harm to the rustic rural character that brings so many people to Muskoka in the first place. (See the Tamwood discussion in this Newsletter, below)

Also concerning are the communal septic treatment agreements, the lack of amenities at the resorts and the reduced availability of rooms to the traveling public. Further, we doubt the local municipality's ability to enforce these policies. Who would count how many units are "residential", and what would they do when the 50% maximum is exceeded?

The MLA was heartened to hear that the District committee appeared to understand our concerns and requested that staff take more time to review these policies. The MLA's delegation letter can be found [here](#).

District Schedules Special Meeting to Discuss Options re Council Composition – District Chair John Klinck has called a special meeting of District Council for June 19th to discuss council composition. For some years there have been concerns that the three Towns (Huntsville, Bracebridge and Gravenhurst) in Muskoka have too much power on District Council. The three towns have 12 representatives on Council, while the three townships (Muskoka Lakes, Lake of Bays and Georgian Bay) have just 10 – even though more ratepayers live in the Townships (thanks to their seasonal populations).

The District Chair now wants to explore other options and see if there is councillor support for changing the composition of council. Any change has to be finalized by the end of this year to be effective in the 2018 municipal election. ***The MLA hopes that any change in council make-up will result in equal representation from the Towns and Townships.***

Update on OPP Municipal Billing – District has voted to seek a second legal opinion regarding the allocation of future municipal OPP billing among Muskoka's six municipalities. Key questions include: If this is a tax, should it be allocated on the general levy or through a special area levy, or a combination of both? ***Allocation of OPP policing costs has been a very contentious issue, pitting Towns against the Townships. The MLA hopes that a fairer allocation of policing costs can be agreed upon.***

Funding Request from Three Mile Lake to Reduce Algae Blooms - Over the past several years, Three Mile Lake in the Township of Muskoka Lakes has experienced frequent cyanobacteria ("blue-green") algal blooms. In response, the Three Mile Lake Association plans to install an ultrasound unit to control blue-green algae in a portion of the lake during the summer of 2017 as a pilot project. The association has asked the District for funding for a second ultrasonic unit. This second unit would be a back-up unit if the first unit fails, and it would provide additional data. The additional cost of a second unit would be \$15,774. District planning committee recommended that additional funding be sought from the Muskoka Watershed Council (MWC), the Township of Muskoka Lakes and the Ministry of the Environment & Climate Change, and that District council approve funding for the second unit subject to written endorsement by the MWC. ***The MLA is partnering with the Three Mile Lake Association on this project and is hopeful these ultrasonic units will prove a viable solution.***

District Receives \$450,000 Federal Funding for Flood Plain Mapping of the Muskoka River Watershed – The District's submission, which was accompanied by a letter of support from the Muskoka Lakes Association, outlined the District's interest in facilitating local flood plain mapping which resulted in federal funding. The project involves updating information about Muskoka's local waterways regarding Muskoka's significant flood plains, in order to develop appropriate mitigation and communication strategies for areas most affected by recent flood events, as well as appropriate planning policies. The mapping will focus on the largest lake chains and is estimated to cost \$900,000. The Federal Government has offered to contribute up to half of the total project costs. The District will now seek funding from other partners; most importantly the Provincial Government.

Once a flood zone has been mapped, there are consequences for those who have structures on a flood plain or are hoping to build. ***Although Bracebridge and Huntsville residents, with homes built in the flood plain, qualified for funding assistance after the flood of 2013, it is unclear if they would be compensated in the future. The MLA supports flood plain mapping as a way to assist area planners avoiding further development in these flood-prone areas.***

District Reviews its Planning Application Processes – Consultants have recommended that District planning acquire new application-tracking software and that draft-approved development applications be cancelled if

they are more than 10 years old. **Another finding was that Muskoka, unlike every municipality in Ontario, does not impose development charges that recover the costs of managing applications.** The District needs a modern fee review to ensure that the taxpayers are not shouldering the burden of development. ***The MLA has been hammering away on this issue for years, requesting that the District of Muskoka increase its development charges. We understand that these fees were lowered several years ago to stimulate more development applications, but it has resulted in higher costs for Muskoka residents.***

TOWN OF BRACEBRIDGE

The Town Announces Purchase of Downtown Timber Mart Property - Mayor Graydon Smith announced the Town's purchase of the Timber Mart property at 10 Entrance Drive, at the eastern entrance to Manitoba Street. Mayor Smith said the site was acquired "to support the development of an even more vibrant and prosperous downtown." (Timber Mart will continue to lease this site back until it finds a new location.) The Timber Mart property was identified in 2008 as an integral site for downtown redevelopment. Acquiring this property will provide a public link between the downtown, the water-front parks and trails along Bracebridge Bay, and Woodchester Villa. Bracebridge will be developing a new Downtown Master Plan in 2018. See the Town's press release [here](#).

Premier Wynne Comes to Bracebridge to Formally Announce Funding for Replacement of Stephenson Road Bridge -On Friday May 26, Premier Kathleen Wynne was joined by Mayor Graydon Smith for the formal announcement of top-up funding from the Community Infrastructure Fund (OCIF) for the replacement of the Stephenson Road 1 Bridge. Mayor Smith has campaigned for stable, predictable infrastructure funding from the provincial government. He thanked the premier for this investment and noted that Muskoka's Canadian Shield topography means there are many bridges in need of replacement. The province is covering 90 per cent of the \$1,176,000 replacement cost; the balance is split evenly between Bracebridge and Huntsville. ***The MLA is pleased to see that Muskoka is the recipient of some much needed infrastructure funds.***

TOWN OF GRAVENHURST

District Council Supports Gravenhurst's Continued Discussions with the Province regarding the China Maple Leaf Schools project -On May 15th District Council voted unanimously to support the redevelopment of the Muskoka Regional Centre property, and to request the Province continue positive negotiations with the Town. It is hoped that "creative measures can ensure this opportunity comes to fruition." A copy of the resolution of support will be sent to the Premier, the Minister of Infrastructure, the Minister of Economic Development and Growth, Parry Sound/Muskoka MP Tony Clement, Parry Sound/Muskoka MPP Norm Miller and all Ontario MPPs. ***The MLA believes that if this project goes ahead, it should do so without benefit of local public funds.***

District Gives Final Approval to Gravenhurst's New Official Plan -After several public meetings, and many consultations, including with the MLA, the Town of Gravenhurst submitted its Official Plan (OP) to the District for approval. On May 15th District Council approved the OP with some modifications. The OP will be further amended when District's new Lake Health System policy is adopted. Further amendments could be implemented through the development of Lake Plans by various Lake Associations to address some outstanding concerns. There is an outstanding issue regarding the Taboo Resort property and the concerns of a local community association in regards to height permissions in rezoning that resort. The last day to appeal any portion of the OP is June 14th. ***The MLA was pleased that a number of our suggestions have been incorporated into the new OP. The MLA continues to stress how important the environment is to the Muskoka experience.***

Gravenhurst Council Supports a 6-month Trial of a Downtown Bus Service - Beginning July 1st, Gravenhurst residents will have a new transit service three days a week. A partnership between the District and Hammond Transportation means the Corridor 11 bus will provide six 30-minute travel loops through the urban core of

Gravenhurst. Local residents and tourists can use this new service from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from July 1st to the end of December. The bus is free to ride for the first two months, after which the fee is estimated to be \$2.00. Details can be found [here](#). The Corridor 11 Bus Schedule can be found [here](#). ***The MLA appreciates efforts to help those who travel to Gravenhurst by boat more easily access the downtown core.***

SEGUIN TOWNSHIP

Councillor Jack Hepworth's May 15th Council/Community Report –This issue by Councillor Hepworth gives an update on the installation of new household waste/recycling bins for the Stanley House Transfer Site. He also writes about: Rosseau Lake College celebrating its 50th birthday on June 17th; a Muskoka Watershed Council paper on man-made chemicals in our waters; a new shop called “Food and Fervor”; and a summary of Seguin’s latest council meeting. ***For full details see: www.jackhepworth.ca Thanks to Councillor Hepworth for his detailed report!***

Algae Blooms in Muskoka -Councillor Hepworth has also provided a thorough summary of algal blooms found in Muskoka/Seguin as discussed at the MWC’s ‘50 Shades of Green’ conference May 12th. The summary is worth a read. Algae blooms are becoming a real problem throughout Ontario and actions need to be taken to eradicate them. ***The MLA is partnering with the Three Mile Lake Association and the Township of Muskoka Lakes to tackle this problem.***

TOWNSHIP OF MUSKOKA LAKES (TML)

TML Council Requests Your Input – This year’s budget discussions made it apparent that the Township will have to make some hard decisions on whether to increase taxes or reduce services to balance the 2018 Budget. Discussions centred on the possible closure of some community centres and fire halls. Recently council discussed whether to reduce the number of councillors in TML from 10 to 7. A reduction of 3 councillors would reduce council costs by about \$60,000 (each councillor earns \$19,300 plus expenses). A reduced council would mean an increased workload for remaining councillors. Township staff has increased since the Township amalgamated, but the number of councillors has remained the same. One councillor suggested that more councillors mean more creative ideas at the council table, and that often results in healthier, more democratic debate.

Council unanimously agreed that these decisions should be based on input from all residents; both year-round and seasonal. Council has scheduled the following meeting dates to hear what YOU have to say: **Thursday, July 13th and Thursday, August 17th at 9 a.m. in the Township of Muskoka Lakes Council Chambers, Port Carling.** ***The MLA strongly urges area residents to attend and provide your comments. For those not able to attend, an on-line survey, which includes the matter of Council composition, will be launched in conjunction with the July 13th public meeting.***

Council Agrees to Continue Contract with Consultant re OPP Costing Strategy – Last year TML, along with Georgian Bay and Lake of Bays townships, hired consultant Campbell Strategies to help it achieve a fairer allocation of OPP policing costs in Muskoka. To date TML has paid the consultant \$80,600. Mayor Don Furniss asked council to continue to work with the consultant for another 2 months, at a cost of \$12,000. Mayor Furniss stated “I’d hate to give up our efforts when there is a potential \$3 million in savings for TML taxpayers.” The resolution to continue to work with the consultant passed, with Councillors Phil Harding, Ruth Nishikawa and Terry Ledger opposed. They felt the effort was redundant after District council voted to pay for a third legal opinion on OPP cost allocation. Councillor Phil Harding felt the solution was to work with other District councillors, while most councillors felt the best way forward was to get the province on-side.

“Villas of Lake Muskoka” Resort (former “Tamwood” Property)- The first phase of this development (across from Kirrie Glen golf course on Hwy 118 just west of Bracebridge) with 7 buildings /15 units is near completion. The site plan for the full property allows 23 units and a swimming pool. An application for a change of ownership (condominium) came to TML in May. TML planning staff were concerned that the swimming pool was not being built in the first phase of the development, as a pool is part of the amenities offered by a resort. The District wishes to ensure this property will be run as a resort and does not become 100% residential. A member of the public addressed council on May 12th stating 3 concerns with this development:

1. What assurance does TML have that this development will not eventually become 100% residential? How can TML enforce the requirement that a certain percentage of these units are available to the travelling public?
2. Why was this development allowed to proceed with a septic approval that dates back to 1978? The tank is new and the tile bed has been repaired, but today’s standards require a new approval and inspection. The original approval applied to the previous development, which would have generated about a third of the septic/water flow that this new project will have.
3. The pool needs to be part of the first phase of development in order to ensure this is a true resort.

TML council had no issues with the pool being built in the second phase or with the 1978 MOE approval. However, the same individual addressed District’s planning committee a week later very concerned about this development depending on a 40-year-old MOE approval. District committee has asked that this application come back to them for final approval after District public works reviews the application. ***This case demonstrates why the MLA is so concerned about the District’s new draft Official Plan, which proposes to allow up to 50% of resort units to be developed as residential. If a resort is defined as having amenities (like a pool), then these should be built in the first phase, to ensure they actually get built. The MLA was shocked to learn that this development was allowed to proceed with such an outdated septic approval. If the newly repaired septic is overloaded and eventually fails, the MLA is concerned the effluent will find its way into nearby Lake Muskoka. We are pleased that District is looking into this.***

Port Carling Health Hub Hires a Second Nurse Practitioner for the Summer –The Port Carling Health Hub has received one-time funding for a second nurse practitioner – for Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays until Sept. 9th. Councillor Allen Edwards reminds everyone that the Health Hub is NOT a walk-in clinic– you must phone to make an appointment. (In an emergency, a nurse practitioner *may* see you.) ***This is good news for both year-round and seasonal residents. The Health Hub has proven very popular and was in need of another nurse practitioner during the peak summer months.***

Update on Bridge/Road Construction– Port Carling Bridge construction is now complete. Bala Bridge is 90% complete and is anticipated to be finished June 7th. Bike lane construction on Muskoka Road 7 (Peninsula Road), which began on May 15th, is expected to be completed by June 21st. ***The MLA thanks the District Public Works department and Public Works Committee for ensuring construction is completed quickly and with minimal disruption to traffic. Year-round residents and seasonal residents all appreciate that the Port Carling bridge construction was completed ahead of schedule and that all lanes of the Bala and Port Carling bridges were open for the May long weekend.***

2017 Mayor’s Golf Classic –This event is scheduled for Monday, June 26th at The Rock golf course. Cost is \$200 per person, which includes breakfast, lunch and buffet dinner. There will be an auction, games and prizes. Registration begins at 9:30 a.m. This year’s beneficiary is Andy’s House Hospice in Port Carling.

RECAP of Key Public Meeting Dates

Monday, June 19th at 4 p.m.-District councillors to discuss options regarding District council composition. To be held at District council chambers, Bracebridge.

Thursday, July 13th and Thursday, August 17th at 9 a.m. in Township of Muskoka Lakes Council Chambers, Port Carling -TML public meetings to receive feedback on managing next year's budget. Council wants to know your thoughts on closing certain community centres, downloading of District roads to TML, and the appropriate number of township councillors.

Saturday, July 15th (9 to 11 a.m.) and Thursday, August 17th (7 to 9 p.m.)-Open Houses re: the District's new Official Plan. To be held at District council chambers, Bracebridge.

Tuesday, August 29th from 7 to 9 p.m.-Public Statutory Meeting re: the District Official Plan. To be held at District council chambers, Bracebridge.

The MLA urges everyone to attend these important meetings to listen and provide your comments. At minimum, if you have concerns, email your comments to your councillor.

Your representatives need to know what YOU think.