

Welcome to the January 2017 issue of MLA NewsBites –

Happy and healthy New Year all! The MLA reminds everyone to continue to check your cottage regularly over the winter months. Climate change brings about more unexpected and violent storms, greater variation in temperatures and as seen so far this winter, increasing snow packs in Muskoka. We recommend that, as snow builds up, you plan (or arrange for someone else) to shovel cottage and boathouse roofs, clear away downed branches or trees and to check locks, deadbolts and windows to ensure your property is safe and secure. NOTE that insurance coverage may depend on continued and regular attendance at your property.

DISTRICT OF MUSKOKA

District Official Plan (OP) Update–The District continues to review its Official Plan (OP). The District of Muskoka held an Open House on the current draft on Wednesday, January 18th. The purpose of the Open House was to give the public an informal opportunity to review and ask questions of the consultant and staff regarding directions to guide policy development for the new Official Plan. Written submissions, either in support of, or in opposition to, all or parts of the proposed preliminary directions should be received at the District office prior to Wednesday, January 25th, 2017. The District OP review will be on-going throughout 2017 and there will be other meetings and opportunities for public comment. ***The MLA is currently reviewing the directional policies and will be providing comments to the District. The MLA will keep you informed of any up-coming meetings.***

TOWN OF BRACEBRIDGE

Bracebridge receives Provincial Gas Tax Funding – Bracebridge recently received funding from the province for transit operations. This is a formula based funding allocation for municipalities with operating transit systems. The funding formula is based on ridership statistics, however, since this is Bracebridge’s first year of transit operations, the funding allocation is population based. The Town’s allocation for April 1st, 2016 to March 31st, 2017 is \$130,541. More information on the Provincial Gas Tax Program can be found [here](#). ***The MLA congratulates Bracebridge on receipt of funding and wishes the Town much success with its new “Ride the Wave” transit program.***

Annual ‘Fire & Ice’ Event Saturday, January 28th – Bracebridge’s downtown will be transformed into a lively festive atmosphere on January 28th as the Town hosts their annual ‘Fire & Ice’ celebration. A downtown ‘tube run’, ice sculptures, skating trail, fire pits providing fireside snacks, music and entertainment all plan to make this an event worth attending. Full event details can be found [here](#).

Bracebridge is looking for input on Parks and Trails – The town of Bracebridge is looking for stakeholder input to help identify needs, issues and priorities as they relate to investment in and the development of recreation, parks and trail systems in Bracebridge. A public workshop is scheduled for Thursday, January 26th at 6:30 pm at the Bracebridge Sportsplex. If you are unable to attend, an online survey will be available starting January 27th and can be found [here](#).

TOWN OF GRAVENHURST

Council Adopts new Official Plan (OP) – On December 20th, 2016 Gravenhurst’s Town Council voted unanimously to adopt the final draft of the Town’s new Official Plan (OP). The OP is the municipality’s key planning document, intended to guide and control future land use development. It establishes policies for the use and management of land within the Town of Gravenhurst. The Planning Act requires that an OP be reviewed periodically to ensure that the Plan is consistent with the most current Provincial and District land use planning policy and legislation

and that it continues to reflect matters of interest to the community. ***The MLA was present at all Open Houses and council meetings where the new OP was discussed and delegated at several meetings over the last two years providing input into the new Plan. The MLA is pleased that the Town has incorporated many of our ideas and thanks the Town for allowing us to comment.***

Reminder of Budget Meetings Dates – Gravenhurst Council’s deliberations on the Operating Budget begin February 15th, 2017 and continue until the proposed approval and adoption on March 7th, 2017. The full schedule can be found [here](#). ***The MLA will be attending the budget meetings and will be reporting back to our members via NewsBites.***

Gravenhurst Looks Back at 2016 – Gravenhurst staff have produced a video looking back at some of the highlights and memorable events in Gravenhurst of 2016. The video can be found [here](#).

SEGUIN TOWNSHIP

Rosseau Waterfront Webcams – While away from your cottage this winter check out the weather conditions in Rosseau via Seguin Township’s webcams. The cameras are located at the Rosseau waterfront park located on Hwy. 141 in the village of Rosseau. Webcam images found [here](#).

TOWNSHIP OF MUSKOKA LAKES (TML)

Reminder of TML Budget Meetings - Discussions on TML’s 2017 Budget will take place in council chambers on the following dates:

Thursday, January 26th, 2017 – Special Meeting of Council and Public Input at 7 p.m.

Thursday, February 2nd, 2017 – Special Meeting of Committee of the Whole at 9 a.m.

Friday, February 17th, 2017 – Council Meeting to consider Budget Adoption at 9 a.m.

The first public TML Budget meeting was held January 17th, with the original Public Input meeting scheduled for January 20th – just 3 days later. Now very recently re-scheduled for January 26th, the MLA remains concerned that the short amount of time available for review of the draft budget, between its introduction on the 17th and the Public Input meeting on the 26th about the proposed Budget, means that few will have sufficient opportunity to digest, understand and be in a position to provide meaningful input into this highly important issue. Further, while the operating Budget did get fully discussed in the introductory meeting, the Capital Budget remains an open item – the public deserves better!

The preliminary numbers suggest another very painful year (perhaps decade) for taxpayers in TML; current estimates suggesting at least a 9.84% municipal tax increase. The draft budget can be found [here](#). The Township’s press release can be found [here](#). ***The MLA is attending the budget meetings and will be reporting on these meetings in the February issue of NewsBites.***

Council votes against proposed Medical Marijuana Facility in Torrance – A rezoning application to allow a medical marijuana production facility in Torrance was turned down on a vote of 8 to 2 at the December council meeting. Councillors were concerned that this facility, which would be in close proximity to neighbouring children’s summer camps and cottages, could have security issues, odours coming from the facility and environmental impacts on the water and septic systems. The applicant has indicated he will appeal council’s decision to the OMB. Local news story can be found [here](#). ***The MLA agrees with the Council’s decision that this location in Torrance is the wrong location for a medical marijuana facility.***

Cox Bay Rezoning Application - TML received a severance application and a zoning amendment application for a parcel of land located in Cox Bay, Lake Joseph near Port Sandfield. The application was to create one new building lot with frontage on Cox Bay, Lake Joseph, leaving the remaining 80 acres behind neighbouring cottages on Cox Bay for future backlot development. The zoning amendment proposed to rezone the proposed severed lot from Waterfront Residential (WR4) to Waterfront Residential (WR1) and provide exemptions to minimum lot requirements. The lot in question has 71 feet of waterfront frontage on Lake Joseph and 14 acres in lot area. Approval of these requests would then allow a 71 foot waterfront lot on Lake Joseph to become a building lot when the current zoning by-law requires a minimum of 100 feet of waterfront. After hearing many people delegate in opposition to this proposal, TML's Committee of Adjustment voted unanimously to deny the application. At the December Council meeting, the applicant's agent addressed Council and stated that the applicant has withdrawn his application. Council chose to consider the matter and to retain the WR4 zoning on the property. ***The MLA wrote a letter of opposition to TML requesting that TML zoning regulations be upheld and that this application be denied. Our letter can be found [here](#).***

Leonard Lake Rezoning Application – TML received a consent to sever application to divide one existing lot into five additional lots on Leonard Lake. TML's Committee of Adjustment reviewed the application and voted to defer the application to allow for the completion of a Water Quality Environmental Impact Study. The District of Muskoka also wrote a letter requesting deferral for completion of this study, in accordance with their existing OP policy. TML Council also received a rezoning application to permit cottages to be built on these five new lots. At the December Council meeting several people spoke in opposition to this application. As well, TML staff stated they had received over 80 submissions in opposition to this application. Those opposed expressed concerns of allowing additional lot creation and development on a lake that is already experiencing deteriorating water quality, and requested that TML Council dismiss the application. Under the District's current lake health plan, Leonard Lake has been classified as moderately sensitive and over threshold. Council voted unanimously to refuse the application. ***The MLA also sent in a letter of concern as regards to the effect on Leonard Lake's water quality from increased development. Our letter can be found [here](#).***

Demolition and Rebuild of a Heritage Landmark in Port Carling –An application to demolish and rebuild the Port Carling BoatWorks site was received by TML in November. The Township's newly appointed Heritage Advisory Committee reviewed the application and recommended Council allow the demolition of the existing building upon the condition that site plan control is implemented; thus making sure that the new building will be built as shown on the plans presented to TML Council by the applicant. The new plans show that efforts have been made to replicate the original building. Council voted unanimously to allow the demolition and reconstruction according to plans submitted by the owner. ***The MLA is pleased that the new Heritage Advisory Committee thoroughly reviewed the application and recommended site plan control be enacted.***

BALA FALLS UPDATE –

At the December Council meeting, Mitchell Shnier of the Save the Bala Falls organization delegated on the safety issues surrounding Swift River Energy Ltd.'s (SREL) new drawings. Mitchell stated that the proposed location of the canoe portage route is too close to the fast moving water exiting from the generating station. The proposed site would encourage canoers to paddle through these dangerous waters. Mitchell had received more than 90 emails from people expressing concerns over the safety of this portage route's location. Mitchell encouraged TML to send a letter to the province expressing concern over the safety of in-water recreation at this site. After a short discussion period from Council, Council voted on the following resolutions -

1. That TML accept SREL's Rehabilitation Plan for Portage Landing – Carried 6 to 3 with Councillors Sandy Currie, Ruth Nishikawa and Donelda Hayes opposed.

2. A By-law to authorize the Mayor and Clerk to execute and affix the corporate seal to a Heritage Easement Agreement between TML and SREL for the conservation and rehabilitation of Portage Landing – Carried 7 to 3 with Councillors Sandy Currie, Ruth Nishikawa and Donelda Hayes opposed.
3. A By-law to temporarily designate ‘No Parking/Tow Away Zones’ on certain roads in Bala during the term of construction of SREL’s hydro plant – Carried 7 to 3 with Councillors Sandy Currie, Ruth Nishikawa and Donelda Hayes opposed.
4. A By-law to exempt SREL from the provisions of certain TML By-laws - Carried 6 to 4 with Councillors Sandy Currie, Ruth Nishikawa, Donelda Hayes and Phil Harding opposed.
5. A motion put forward by Councillor Donelda Hayes, and seconded by Phil Harding, to send the Ministries a letter expressing public concerns over the safety of the proposed portage route at the proposed hydro plant. Motion carried on a vote of 8 to 2 with Councillors Jean-Ann Baranik and Terry Ledger opposed.

Save the Bala Falls’ latest newsletter can be found [here](#).

[2017 MLA Mixed Curling Bonspiel](#)

The MLA invites you to come out and join in the fun at our annual Curling Bonspiel at the South Muskoka Curling Club (Bracebridge) on February 3rd and 4th.

Registration is \$200 per team.

**The winner will be presented the MLA’s 50-plus year old Curling Cup
For all the details, please contact Jennifer Josiak, Bonspiel Co-ordinator at 705-646-0982 or
smcgc.bonspiels@gmail.com. We hope you’ll join us!**

[2017 Muskoka Winter Carnivals](#)

**[Port Carling Winterfest – February 3rd to 5th](#)
www.portcarlingwinterfest.ca**

**[Gravenhurst Winter Carnival – February 19th to 26th](#)
www.skokie.wixsite.com/gravenhurst**

**[Bracebridge ‘Fire & Ice’ Festival – January 28th](#)
www.fireandicebracebridge.com**

**[Dwight Winter Carnival – February 10th to 11th](http://www.huntsvilleadventures.com/cultural-events/winter-cultural/dwight-winter-carnival/)
<http://www.huntsvilleadventures.com/cultural-events/winter-cultural/dwight-winter-carnival/>**

**[Baysville Winterfest – February 20th](http://www.huntsvilleadventures.com/cultural-events/winter-cultural/baysville-winterfest/)
www.huntsvilleadventures.com/cultural-events/winter-cultural/baysville-winterfest/**

**[Dorset Snowball Winter Carnival – February 17th to 18th](http://www.dorsetsnowball.com)
www.dorsetsnowball.com**