



Welcome to July/August 2016 NewsBites –

A reminder to everyone – During these hot humid summer days please be aware of your local municipality's fire rating and regulations. The Forest Fire Danger Rating in the District of Muskoka has recently been upgraded to '**EXTREME**'. Muskoka Fire Chiefs have issued a **TOTAL FIRE BAN** for the District of Muskoka. This means no campfires, no burning of brush, no open flames (i.e. chimineas) and no fireworks. For the full press release, including who to contact for more information, please see the press release found [here](#).

### **DISTRICT OF MUSKOKA**

**District's Proposed New Lake System Health Policy** – For the last thirty years, the District's Lake System Health Program has been focused on phosphorous concentration. Every ten years the District undertakes a comprehensive review of this program, including its Recreational Water Quality model, to keep pace with the most up-to-date scientific research and data. In January of this year Hutchison Environmental Sciences Ltd. (HESL) submitted its technical report on the District's Lake System Health Program. District staff has now drafted a revised policy in consideration of Hutchison's findings.

***Suggested changes*** - HESL found Muskoka's water quality was very good and that phosphorous levels were stabilizing. Thus planning policy based on the Recreational Water Quality Model, with a narrow focus on phosphorus, is no longer warranted.

**HESL recommends that all lakes, in addition to phosphorous testing, be protected through a required set of standard best management practices for all new development or redevelopment of shoreline lots.**

***What this new Lake System Health Policy means from a Planning Perspective*** - The current water quality model is based on lake sensitivity whereby lakes are assigned to a category; i.e. low/medium or high. Today, developments on moderately sensitive lakes can occur as long as site plan control is in place. If a lake is over-threshold for phosphorous, the District requires a Water Quality Impact Study to be done to ensure there are no negative impacts from the development. Without exception, the District realised that development can responsibly occur through use of a set of best management practices under site plan control. Site plan control includes requirements for vegetative buffers, storm water management, enhanced setbacks and shoreline naturalization.

***Next Steps*** – This new policy is a major change in the District's Official Plan and will require an amendment to the Official Plan. Discussions with each municipality are occurring. Policies, once finalized, will go to District Council for approval and then on to the province for its approval. The process is expected to be finalized by summer 2017. The full staff report can be found [here](#). ***The MLA is meeting with District planning staff in August to learn how this new water quality model will affect local area planning applications.***

### **District undertakes Two-year Study into Muskoka's Water and Sewer Systems** –

District's engineering and public works committee has awarded a contract to GDH Consulting to provide an in-depth examination of the District's water and sewer services. The study is expected to take more than two years to complete. The consultants would be responsible for reviewing the district's existing water and sewer system, creating hydraulic models for the system based on existing populations and considering future growth; finally field-testing the model. According to a local news article, Muskoka has some of the highest residential, commercial and industrial water and sewer fees in the province. See the full news article [here](#). - ***The MLA***

***understands that increasing costs to repair/replace aging infrastructure requires the District to have an accurate model of their entire system to help plan for future expenditures.***

#### **District continues negotiations regarding OPP Billing Model –**

Julie Stevens, District Commissioner of Finance and Corporate Services, and District CAO Michael Duben continue to attend an Ontario Provincial Police discussion group that debates police services and costs. The new police services billing model has been hotly contested by municipalities such as Muskoka, which has seen massive fee increases, since it was implemented in 2015. The District's fees will increase from \$10.9 million in 2014 to roughly \$14.2 million in 2016. Higher fees are expected in 2017. Stevens said the group's latest meeting included discussion on billing adjustments, ongoing OPP wage negotiations and commercial lot calculations. The full news article can be found [here](#). ***The MLA continues to hope that a more reasonable billing model will result from these discussions.***

#### **TOWN OF BRACEBRIDGE**

**Bracebridge embarks on Phase 2 of its new Zoning By-law –** Bracebridge has adopted its new Official Plan and is now reviewing its Zoning By-law. An Official Plan deals with the future, whereas a Zoning By-law regulates the use of the land and tells us what we can do today. The Town has hired Jim Dymont of MHBC Planning as their consultant to review and revise the Zoning By-law. Phase 1 of the Zoning By-law, which focused primarily on Urban Centres and general 'housekeeping', has been completed. Phase 1 resulted in an amendment to the current Comprehensive Zoning By-law 2006-120 in May 2016.

On July 14<sup>th</sup>, the Town held a public open house to discuss revisions to the Rural and Waterfront Areas of Bracebridge. Possible revisions to the rural area include: changes to lot size, secondary units in rural areas, the use of trailers and shipping containers as accessory buildings, updated policies re pits and quarries, policies relating to home offices/ industries in rural areas and the creation of a Rural Institutional Zone. ***Waterfront policies are also being reviewed as follows: minimum frontage for boathouses, percentage of shoreline coverage, policies for the creation of new lots and water access lots, dock projections on the North and South branches of the Muskoka River and setbacks and buffers along the waterfront.*** Policies for marinas, campgrounds, narrow waterbodies, wetlands and deer wintering areas are also being examined. A draft of Phase 2 policies is expected beginning of August and a formal public meeting is expected mid-August. The full PowerPoint presentation outlining proposed revisions can be found [here](#). ***The MLA encourages both seasonal and permanent residents to participate in the discussions regarding this important planning document.***

**Bracebridge listed as a 'Best Place to Live' -** For the first time Money Sense magazine has added Bracebridge to their list of the best places to live in Canada based on quality of life. Bracebridge ranked 18<sup>th</sup> out of 219 cities and towns; Gravenhurst came in at 129. Rating categories included: Low Unemployment, High Incomes, Access to Health Care, Affordable Housing, Healthy Population Growth, Low Taxes, Low Crime, Good Weather, Easy Transport and Strong Arts and Sports Community. See [here](#) for the entire list. ***The MLA congratulates Bracebridge on its high ranking!***

#### **TOWN OF GRAVENHURST**

**Gravenhurst's New Official Plan Review –** On July 26<sup>th</sup>, the Town was presented with a draft of the new Official Plan as prepared by consultant Rick Hunter of Landscape. Council will be reviewing this document and bring any revisions to the next Council meeting in August. ***A public open house is scheduled for Saturday, August 13<sup>th</sup> from 10 a.m. to noon in the Town's municipal office Council Chambers. A statutory public meeting will be held Tuesday, August 23<sup>rd</sup> at 5 p.m. to formally present the new Official Plan (OP) to Council. The public is invited to***

**attend both the August 13<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> meetings to provide your comments to Council on the new OP.** Some highlights outlined include changing a portion of the Gull Lake shoreline back to Urban Residential, there are no changes to the Great Gulf Homes 'Kendari' property on Gull Lake, mapping errors corrected, modify the boundary of the Severn Bridge Rural Settlement Area to include additional lands, revised Growth Management goals, provisions for two storey boathouses on Lake Muskoka and Muskoka Bay on lots greater than 90 metres frontage (300 feet), a framework for redevelopment of the Wharf Road boathouses, new policies taking into consideration green energy, climate change and sustainability.

To review the full 186 page document, see [here](#). ***The MLA was pleased to see several of our suggestions incorporated into the draft document. The MLA will be attending both meetings. We encourage all Gravenhurst residents and Gravenhurst lake associations to attend at least one of the August public meetings to provide your comments to help shape your town.***

**Muskoka Regional Centre Property Update**—The Town of Gravenhurst has issued a formal 'Request for Expression of Interest' for the Muskoka Regional Centre property. The intent of this document is to seek qualified proponents to create a partnership to acquire and redevelop the site located at 2000 Muskoka Road North, Gravenhurst. Glen Davies, chief administrative officer said "We look forward to acquiring a strong partner who will come to the table and help us work towards making this property a prominent and prosperous part of this community once again." Proposals are due Friday, September 16<sup>th</sup> at 12 noon. In addition to submissions, potential respondents will have the opportunity to participate in a site tour of the property on Wednesday, August 17<sup>th</sup>. After the September 16<sup>th</sup> deadline, Council hopes to approve a preferred partner, undertake negotiations with the successful partner(s) and have further discussions with Infrastructure Ontario will follow. ***The MLA reiterates that this sensitive and significant site needs careful consideration for redevelopment in order to fulfill the Town's goals and be sensitive to its shoreline character.***

### **SEGUIN TOWNSHIP**

**Good News re Seguin's Financial Status** – Seguin Township's Chief Financial Officer Michele Fraser reported that to Council that, as of July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2016 - "The current projected year end surplus is up to \$199,100, from the \$24,330 previously reported; this is due to higher than expected tax sale proceeds recoveries, which were discussed with Council previously. Revenues remain strong, and expenditures in all departments are still projected to be within budget." Capital projects are well under way for 2016. Activity in the Reserves and Reserve Funds has been minimal and up to \$25,000 of the Contingency budget of \$100,000 has been allocated to the rehabilitation of the lower level of the Rosseau Memorial Hall.

Councillor Jack Hepworth reported the above, along with other Council highlights in his monthly Council Report which can be found here: [www.jackhepworth.ca](http://www.jackhepworth.ca). ***The MLA remains impressed with Seguin Township's continued fiscal responsibility and thanks Councillor Hepworth for his timely and detailed reports.***

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

**TML's 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2016 Financial Report** - From the TML Treasurer's report – "From our review of the financial results for the second quarter of 2016, the Township of Muskoka Lakes is tracking within its operating budget. Net operating expenditures have resulted in \$4,255,682 leaving 58.7% of the budgeted amount for the remaining half of the year." The full financial report can be found [here](#) starting on page 122. ***The MLA is happy to see that the Township is living within its budgeted means. We continue to advocate for a full-time By-law Enforcement Officer.***

**Cove Marina Dock Expansion has been appealed to the OMB-** At the June 17<sup>th</sup> TML Council meeting, Council voted to grant Cove Marina a Temporary Use By-law to re-install the pre-existing floating docks to a length of 169 feet, for a 2 year period. This would allow the Cove to install the floating docks that were removed in 2015. Councillors Phil Harding and Jean-Ann Baranik both offered to act as mediators between the Cove and their neighbours to try to reach a reasonable compromise regarding the future plans for the Cove. To date the Cove Marina and the neighbours who oppose the dock expansion have both appealed TML's decision to the OMB. Cove Marina wishes to move ahead with the full development; not just the installation of the floating docks. The neighbours believe the Township should not have granted the by-law allowing the floating docks. There is no date set yet for the OMB hearing. ***The MLA understands the concerns of the neighbours but is disappointed that a compromise has not been able to be reached. It's unfortunate that those island cottagers who require a mainland landing have been forced to find other boat slip accommodation this summer.***

**Redstone Tent & Trailer Park OMB Decision –** On June 24<sup>th</sup> the OMB made the decision to allow Redstone on Lake Rosseau Inc. develop a 50 site trailer park on the site of the previous Gull Lake tent & trailer park. The central focus of the evidence in this appeal was the distinction made between a 'new' and 'existing' tent & trailer park; and which of these two categories captured the proposed Redstone development. The Board decided that the lands zoned WC3 on the Redstone property do constitute an existing tent & trailer park. Although a tent & trailer park had not been in operation on the site since 2006, the intended use of these lands has never changed. As a result, the Board ordered that Section 4.2.13 (f), which states that "New tent & trailer parks shall not be permitted on Lake Joseph, Lake Rosseau and Lake Muskoka" be removed from Zoning By-law 2014-14. Any future proposal to establish a new tent & trailer park will be required to conform to TML's Official Plan, which continues to prohibit any new tent & trailer parks on the three larger lakes. ***The MLA is very disappointed that Council's intention to prohibit this development was not upheld.***

**New Fireworks By-law –** TML Council has approved a new Fireworks By-law. This by-law was established as a result of tourists, renters, permanent and seasonal residents abusing the right to light fireworks. Some Township councillors are regularly contacted by property owners whose neighbours were setting off fireworks at all hours of the night during the summer months; often every night of the week. Consumer fireworks are now only permitted in TML on Friday and Saturday nights without a permit; with the exception of specific holidays such as Canada Day or Victoria Day where the holiday may land on a day other than a Friday or Saturday. Otherwise, a permit must be obtained at the Township Office for fireworks to be fired from Sunday through Thursday. No fireworks shall be fired when the Fire Danger Rating is 'High' or 'Extreme' in accordance with the Outdoor Burning By-Law and no fireworks shall be fired after 11:00 pm in accordance with the Noise By-Law.

This by-law gives TML the authority to charge those individuals who are not in compliance with the by-law. If you wish to complain about any annoying firework displays outside of permitted times, call 911 and ask for fire assistance and provide the 911 location address. Or call the Township office at 705-765-3156 during weekdays to report the use of fireworks outside the permitted days. The by-law can be found [here](#) – pages 284 to 286.

***The MLA understands the desire for this by-law but questions whether or not it can be enforced with Township's limited manpower.***

**Cottage Rentals –** Cottage rentals are popular in Muskoka. With their popularity, problems regarding respect for neighbours are becoming an issue. TML councillors are receiving more and more complaints regarding cottages being used as unregulated 'hotels' with large numbers of renters coming every weekend. Residentially zoned properties are being operated as commercial establishments. One owner delegated to council on this topic and outlined extensive complaints; such as constant noise at all hours of the day and night, continual boat traffic in front of their property, garbage strewn over the property which attracts animals, parking issues with overflow of vehicles, excessive partying and swearing, firework displays every night, lighting of fires during high/extreme fire

warnings and general lack of consideration to the neighbours and knowledge of local customs. The delegate was concerned about decreasing property values, questioned how local resorts are surviving and requested TML address this serious issue via initiating stronger controls by limiting the number of visitors per property. Mayor Don Furniss sympathized but stated “the Township can’t eliminate all short term rentals. Airbnb is a huge problem but it’s very difficult to regulate them. This will be a bigger problem in the future.” Councillor Phil Harding suggested a TML Cottage Rentals By-law and requests that owners make their renters aware of TML regulations and by-laws. TML Council will examine this issue further. ***Once again, the MLA does not see how TML could possibly regulate and enforce any by-laws with their limited by-law resources.***

**District Council passes ATV By-law** – District Council has approved a TML by-law that allows All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs), Off-road Recreational Vehicles (ORVs), and Utility Task Vehicles (UTVs) to travel on all township roads and district roads within the township. This by-law will be in effect for one year; it is a trial period to see the effects of allowing these vehicles use of municipal and district roads in TML. 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 again 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 following link is helpful [here](#).***

### **NEWS RE BALA FALLS –**

At the July 15<sup>th</sup> TML Council meeting Mitchell Shnier of Save the Bala Falls organization delegated to council informing them that Swift River Energy Ltd. (SREL) had submitted two separate applications to MOECC for approval last August; one drawing showing 3 settling tanks placed in the Shield Parking and the other showing 3 settling tanks in Margaret Burgess Park. Mitchell noted that an important component of TML’s decision to lease the TML owned Portage Landing lands to SREL was to avoid any use of Margaret Burgess Park. SREL had assured TML at that time that they would not be using Margaret Burgess Park at all. These applications clearly proved otherwise.

SREL VP Frank Belerique answered that SREL had submitted 2 separate options/drawings to MOECC for approval as TML had not yet signed the lease agreement. He went on to say that now that TML has signed the lease, SREL will definitely not use Margaret Burgess Park for any staging during construction.

The news that the lease had just been signed two days prior to this meeting brought surprise from the audience as well as some councillors; particularly those councillors from Ward A (Bala). Mayor Don Furniss explained that he had signed the lease and had told some councillors, but not all.

The full exchange around the council table is documented in the following local news article [here](#).

The Mayor agreed to send a letter to the MOECC confirming that TML had signed the lease with SREL as a way to ensure that Margaret Burgess Park would be untouched by SREL. See the news article [here](#); complete with video.

***The MLA continues to be concerned about the proposed power plant and the lack of information regarding its design and safety features.***

For more information on the continued safety concerns from Save the Bala Falls organization, please visit <http://savethebalafalls.com/>

---

*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.*

---

**MLA Antique Boat Show - Saturday, August 13<sup>th</sup>**

The MLA Antique Boat Show is a bi-ennial event held at the Port Carling locks and James Bartleman Island. This year's theme will be 'Curvaceous' and will feature 68 wooden antique boats that illustrate that theme.

This year also features demonstrations of Sea Fleas and a display of vintage outboard motors. Come out and admire the gorgeous launches and runabouts and don't forget to stop by the MLA booth to pick up this year's poster.

The show runs from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and admission is **free**.

**Muskoka Conservancy's 'Muskoka on the Edge' Fundraiser – Sunday, August 21<sup>st</sup>**

The Muskoka Conservancy is holding its second 'Muskoka on the Edge' fundraiser Sunday, August 21<sup>st</sup> at the Muskoka Lakes Golf & Country Club, from 5:30pm to 8:30pm.

The Muskoka Conservancy is Muskoka's land trust that protects over 2,300 acres, 34,000 feet of shoreline and 416 acres of wetland. The money raised at this event will help the Muskoka Conservancy protect Muskoka's wild spaces.

For more information, call Muskoka Conservancy at (705) 645-739.