

Bear Ridge campground expansion moves to site plan stage

By Jim Eadie

For the second regular meeting in a row, Wollaston Township council devoted a large portion of their March 10 meeting listening to input from constituents, deliberating, and eventually deciding their course of action related to the proposed zoning amendments for the proposed Bear Ridge Campground and Trailer Park expansion.

"This might be one of the most important decisions we make as a council," said Reeve Graham Blair. "We want this to go forward, but we want to get it right the first time."

The new campground owner wishes to expand the camping facilities over time from the present 37 sites to a maximum of 100. Among other things, this will entail re-zoning several portions of their large property to "Recreational Resort Commercial Special". The owner is proposing to expand back into the property away from the water, and will include upgrading of septic treatment facilities to Ministry of Environment standards.

Adjacent and nearby landowners generally have voiced their respect for the new campground owner, however have raised concerns about traffic, crowding, privacy concerns, and the impact on Wollaston Lake.

Following very considerate submissions and dialogue the decision was handed to council.

"We need to find some sort of compromise here," said Blair. "Putting in a swimming pool, I am inclined to think is a good one."

"I think we should listen to the official planners, we pay them a lot of money for their expertise," said Councillor Michael Fuerth. "This is a kind of unique situation here where the campground is not really on the lake, but across the road from the lake. The original plan (from the County of Hastings planning department) calls for a pool, and it might help out with people crossing the road. If I was a camper, and I wanted to go for a swim, horseshoes is not an option. I am willing to live with up to 50 sites, but the math tells us there isn't enough waterfront for 100 sites. Paul (Hastings County planner) says the pool doesn't have to happen right away."

"I still believe there has to be a dedicated place for kids to cross the road," said resident Pam Moore. "Also, the need for a fence .. to corral people to that point."

The new owner is working with Crowe Valley Conservation Authority (CVCA), and has already had an Environmental Impact Study completed and submitted to CVCA and the municipality.

Council unanimously approved the zoning amendment bylaw, subject to the approval of other agencies having jurisdiction, and with conditions to be met. Development would be allowed up to 50 campsites, and beyond that number the owner will be required to install a pool. In addition, a single point crossing must be developed in consultation with the municipal roads supervisor.

"A separate single point crossing for Bear Ridge really is a separate issue from the general traffic problems on The Ridge Road," noted Councillor Bob Ireland.

"Traffic calming is on our radar for that road," agreed Blair.

The next step will be for the new campground owner to have a site plan prepared which will identify campsites and infrastructure, as well as the required setbacks and buffers. This step will also involve the opportunity for public input and discussion prior to approval.

Council also agreed to formalize a "land use agreement" for the shore road allowance located directly across the road, which has always been used by the campground.

Hospice back to communications basics

Hospice North Hastings is making the rounds of municipal councils for a very good reason, according the spokesperson Barb Shaw.

"We have found that when trying to communicate our message, even in the social media age, that it is necessary to go back to basics," she said. "Our research has shown that residents and visitors in North Hastings reach out very often to municipal staff and community leaders first for answers."

To meet this need, and to assist municipalities to disseminate helpful and timely information, Hospice North Hastings has developed a series of pamphlets that municipalities are being asked to make available in a display for their residents.

On March 10, Wollaston Township council accepted and agreed to partner in this communication endeavor.

Hospice North Hastings is a completely community funded organization that offers 4 programs to the community free of charge.

"The residential hospice house is always open," said Shaw. "Stop by and visit. We were the first rural hospice in Ontario - it's not a scary place, it is really lovely."

The home visiting program provides highly trained volunteers.

"They become the second set of eyes, hands - and very important - ears," said Shaw.

Caregivers often become exhausted and overwhelmed as well, and can access a support program. Hospice North Hastings also has a large medical equipment loan cupboard, which includes everything from crutches to commodes.

"Even grandma visiting from out of town need not travel with all the gear," said Shaw. "We offer the community more than just end of life care."

Further information can be obtained by dropping by the house at 27 Bridge St. E. in Bancroft, or by calling 613-332-8014. Pamphlets should be available soon at municipal offices.

"We recognize that you can't often add days to your life," said Shaw. "But you can add life to your days."