

Pool coming to Bear Ridge Campground

By **Jim Eadie**

It has been a long drawn out process, but at the May 10 regular meeting of Wollaston Township council, Traci and Jay Morrison, the new owners of Bear Ridge Campground and Cottages, ran out of options to avoid installing a pool.

During a complete upgrading of the facility and planning for expansion, the Morrises hit a snag when the county planner and the municipal council called for swimming pool construction to be done at the property due to insufficient waterfront to accommodate the number of proposed sites in the park, as well as to take the pressure off Wollaston Lake. At that time, the Morrises agreed to install a pool once the number of sites reached more than 50, and their lot addition rezoning approval was approved with that condition.

In October 2015, the Morrises returned to council to ask for an amendment, noting that a watercourse on the property includes a stream and ponds, and should be considered part of their waterfront. In addition, a pool did not fit with their camping concept of a wilderness experience. At that time, county planner Paul Walsh and council did a site visit at the campground, and advised Morrison to come up with a "robust" recreational plan that might replace the need for a pool.

At the April 12 meeting, council received a report from the planner, who after reviewing the submitted recreational plan, recommended that the pool condition remain in place. Council appeared unanimously in favour of the planner's recommendations, but the matter was adjourned to a later date to allow further consultation.

On May 10, the issue was again on the municipal council meeting agenda, as the Morrises filed a letter from their lawyer laying out their arguments again.

"I know it's expensive, and an ongoing expense," said Councillor Bob Ireland. "But in the absence of our own planning department, we have to rely on the recommendations of Hastings County Planning. I hate to see something like this going to the Ontario Municipal Board if someone complains. The first thing they will ask us is: what did the planning guy say? So the answer is, you need a pool."

"But the planner has always said that you need to decide," said Traci Morrison. "And you keep putting it back to him."

"Wollaston Lake is considered at capacity now," said Reeve Graham Blair.

"And the planner's comments are pretty clear, and address your lawyers letter," said Councillor Michael Fuerth. "It says a pool is required."

"We will apply for the permit for a pool today then," said Morrison.

Council then passed a resolution allowing further campsite development to take place without enforcement of violation of the bylaw as long as there is activity taking place at the property to have a pool installation completed by the end of this year. It will also now require filing an updated site plan, showing the location of the pool to be installed.