

Wollaston council gets good marks from their auditor

By Jim Eadie

Wollaston Township council received some good news from their auditor at their April 12 regular meeting. "You again have a clean audit, in our opinion," said Joanna Park of Collins Barrow Kawarthas LLP. "The township maintains systems of internal accounting and administrative controls of high quality, consistent with reasonable cost."

"For a small municipality, you are doing very well," Park told council. She noted that they found no unusual or incorrect entries, the staff was helpful, and that the treasurer "has everything put together well."

"We are in pretty good shape, I'd say," said Councillor Michael Fuerth. "Some other small municipalities would kill for that report." "Especially since we will have all of our hard top roads done soon," noted Jennifer Cohen, township clerk.

Council then turned to discussion of the Bear Ridge Camp Ground and Cottages lot addition rezoning, amended site plan, and recreation plan.

In 2013 Jay and Traci Morrison purchased the camp ground, and are in the process of upgrading and expanding the property. Subsequently an application was filed to expand the number of campsites from 50 to 100. An agreement was reached where a hold was placed on any development over 50 unless a pool was installed in the park. Hastings County planning department suggested at that time there was insufficient waterfront to support that many additional campers, and a pool would take the pressure off of the lake.

In October last year, Council revisited the issue with the Morrisons, who wished to pursue expansion solutions other than a pool. Councillors visited the property along with county planner Paul Walsh. The Morrisons noted at that time that they believe now that a watercourse with ponds in the property gives them sufficient waterfront not previously acknowledged, and in any event the pool does not fit the "back to nature" concept of the park. The Morrisons have asserted all along that the cost of a pool is not their biggest concern.

During the October meeting, Walsh was clear that the planners did not view a string of creeks and ponds as waterfront, and the need for a pool remained. "It is best to have a pool," he said at the time. "A good recreational plan that meets expectations would be required to exclude a pool." Council deferred any decision at that time, suggesting that the Morrisons come back with a "strong plan".

The Morrisons subsequently submitted a recreational plan to the municipality, which was forwarded to the Hastings County planning department for review. This review was dated and received apparently just minutes before the council meeting. Authored by planner Walsh, the preliminary staff recommendations, made without public consultation, continue to recommend that the hold on the number of campsites at 50 without a pool remain in effect.

"Given the significance of a swimming pool in contributing to the recreational amenities of the park and its direct relationship to water activities, approval of a site plan should be inclusive of a swimming pool," concluded the report.

"We believe we have the waterfront, and a recreation plan that will keep people busy," said Jay Morrison. "We originally had a wetland in the park, and it was discovered to be a watercourse, which changes it to waterfront. This is usable waterfront, no matter how you look at it."

"We rely on the experts," said Councillor Fuerth. "We agreed to let Paul (Walsh) review your plan," said Fuerth, "I guess he isn't satisfied with the plan and we need to listen to him."

"I remain concerned with the load on the lake from 100 sites," said Councillor Bob Ireland.

"I was talking to Paul (Walsh) last week," said Reeve Graham Blair. "He was quite clear that he wants a pool. You have put a lot of work into this schedule of activities?"

"They will still be there regardless of what happens," said Morrison. "People coming to us are not looking for waterfront?"

"But we have to look to the future," said Blair. "You may not always be the owner, and what will the next owner want to do?"

Council decided to again defer the discussion, pending re-contacting Walsh, and possibly bringing him to another meeting.