



## Sinclair / Finlayson Ward Township of Lake of Bays Councillor Rick Brooks

### Report to Oxbow Lake Cottagers Association AGM

September 2020

*“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair.”*

— Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*

That pretty much sums up our 2020 in a nutshell....BAA Humbug!

I remember our first Zoom meeting and I think we all wondered how this was going to work as it was somewhat chaotic. Almost six months later it runs like clockwork. This is not an accident; practice, maybe, but most certainly the consequence of a capable leader who works in the background smoothing the way by providing guidance, leadership, and delegating, always collaboratively to ensure the best outcome, for that I thank Municipal Clerk Carrie Sykes. That describes accurately our entire team here in the Township of Lake of Bays. I'd like to credit our staff with showing a great deal of resilience in supporting all of us as we bumped along. That pretty much sums up the first nine months of this year..... but not to worry, it too will pass.

I'm sure we all can share stories of how it has affected you, your family or your businesses, but that's for another time, when we can actually sit around, perhaps at 'Muskoka on the Rocks' or enjoy a get together over a BBQ and celebrate the new normal, of life here in Muskoka, still the most beautiful place to be.

I'll try to provide a snapshot of current events and where ideally, we believe we are going and how it may affect **you** our residents;

**The 'AshMuskoka Project' is back up and running again!** Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this program was put on hold, although the evidence of its benefit to our sugar maple forests is now being seen, however it was prudent to put it on hold. That has now changed, and given enough evidence to back the science, it is a go, I continue to encourage you to support this initiative by delivering your stockpiled dry fireplace ash to the **Rosewarne Transfer Station** (Bracebridge) and encourage others to consider supporting them as well. If you are not familiar with this program, check out their website: [www.ashmuskoka.ca](http://www.ashmuskoka.ca) then call **705.640.0948** to order an ash container. **Upcoming drop off dates: TODAY Sept. 12<sup>th</sup>, then Sept.26<sup>th</sup>...more dates added regularly.**

## Off Road Vehicles (ORV's)

This year, I have heard from several concerns about experiencing even more OVRs on the roads, exceeding the by-law prescribed speed, driving without lights or mufflers and not during the posted season for ORV's and of course where they can be driven. Having said that, it is NOT your responsibility to try to police them, but if possible, capture them on your phone, take down particulars of the rider(s) as well as the machine and report it, call the OPP. **(Flyer attached)**

Many have expressed concerns or interest regarding the Township of Lake of Bays' ORV By-Law (ATV By-Law) in the past, like it or not, as with many by-laws, enforcement remains our Achilles' heel as it is the responsibility of the OPP.

Its important to note that given the wording of our by-law, the recent changes by the provincial government are excluded and keeps the door closed for several operators like dirt bikes and 6&8 wheeled vehicles. The exclusion of these vehicles serves a great need to help protect or enhance the lake/land experiences that we enjoy here in our part of Muskoka.

## News from our Economic Development Staff

### 1) CANADA UNITED SMALL BUSINESS RELIEF FUND - NOW OPEN!

The Canada United Small Business Relief Fund is now open to help small Canadian businesses with their COVID-19 recovery efforts through a relief grant of up to \$5,000. The program will support businesses of all kinds from across the country (from retailers to barbershops to farmers) - a limited number of grants are available.

**If awarded, a relief grant can be used for any of the following activities:**

- Purchasing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as masks, face shields, and latex gloves.
- Renovating physical space to adhere to local, Provincial or Federal reopening guidelines.
- Developing or improving e-commerce capabilities for your business.

Grant application window opened on August 31, 2020. Learn more about the [program and eligibility criteria](#).

### 2)STARTER COMPANY PLUS

Are you starting or expanding your business? Muskoka Small Business Centre's Starter Company Plus is a 15-week program starting Nov/Dec 2020 that includes:

- training
- mentoring
- writing a business plan, and
- the opportunity to apply for a \$5000 grant.

To learn more and apply: [muskokasmallbusiness.ca/programs/](https://muskokasmallbusiness.ca/programs/)



## ARTISTS OF THE LIMBERLOST

The **Artists of the Limberlost** have become a staple of fall here in our neck of the woods, but not this year due in part to Covid 19. For some of you, I'm speaking to the converted as YOU are members of this illustrious group and I know you are trying to share the power of art in difficult times.

Consider to support the 21 diverse and talented local artists by digitally exploring their work online at [www.artistsofthelumberlost.ca](http://www.artistsofthelumberlost.ca) and discover new pottery, fibre art, paintings, sculpture, furniture and more on their respective websites.

For me as a fellow resident and member of Kiwanis, I am pleased to share that the **Kiwanis Club of Huntsville Muskoka** has initiated an annual scholarship at Huntsville High School in memory of a cherished founding member. **"The Brenda Wainman Goulet Memorial Scholarship"**

*This scholarship is to be awarded annually by the **Kiwanis Club of Huntsville Muskoka** in memory of **Brenda Wainman Goulet**. Brenda was a graduate of **Ontario College of Art and Design** and over a career spanning 30 years was recognized as a celebrated sculptor of international acclaim, a founding member of the **'Artists of the Limberlost'**, member of **'Muskoka Autumn Studio Tour' (MAST)** as well as **'Huntsville Festival of the Arts'**.*

*The recipient of this scholarship is a graduating student taking Visual Arts, who is continuing in the Arts at a post-secondary institution. The award recipient has been selected by the Visual Arts Department based on the student's body of work over their secondary school career, having been acknowledged as having a superior gift of expression and artistic flair.*

**Planning & Permit Issues:** Again, given the complete shutdown as of March 13<sup>th</sup>, staff have mostly been working from home and trying to facilitate their services to the public as best they can but planning was an area that is under strict Provincial procedures, hence no applications were able to come forward until staff could properly prepare and make it acceptable for staff and Council to work, as well as applicants and public be able to participate. Having said that zoom meetings became the norm and remain so as of today. July saw staff process 18 planning applications over four separate publicly broadcast dates. August was equally intense and we are pleased to say, staff has been able to catch up quite well. Needless to say, I believe that we have a great planning staff and they represent our residents extremely well.

**That is not to say, there are no outstanding issues being worked on, there are;**

**Short Term Rentals (STR):** The staff report on 'Short Term Rentals' came back to Council August 19<sup>th</sup>, it is now available for residents to review and provide additional feedback over the coming months. Staff will review the comments, recommendations and concerns submitted and update their report, with an anticipated return to Council in March 2021.

For information, check out [www.mylakeofbays.ca/STR](http://www.mylakeofbays.ca/STR) or contact;

**April Best-Sararas 705-635-2272 ext. 249**

[abest-sararas@lakeofbays.on.ca](mailto:abest-sararas@lakeofbays.on.ca)

**Community Planning Permit System By-Law (CPPS):** This continues to be researched, reviewing comments from all sources and has been found to be a huge endeavour, replacing the current two distinct by-laws into one and bringing us in line with the Planning Act. The expectation over the coming months, staff is intending to have the by-law draft along with a tracked change version on the website for review, prior to being brought to Council, so comments can be received. We await an approval to meet as staff and Council in person to be better able to discuss this as a group.

**Fire Advisory Committee Update:** Throughout this year we have continued to meet however virtually through zoom meetings, until this past week. We now have had our first face to face meeting since March. I can sum up the reports from around the Township halls as positive, members are continuing to get their ongoing training, albeit in divided groups, again as per covid protocols. As for our hall (STN 30) the recruits are getting great reviews and have been successfully passing their various courses as required. Needless to say, this year their calls have been up, partly due to covid and the reality that many more residents were here earlier than usual and staying more regularly than usual. The other increase in calls pertained to the weather; the number of wind events and even 3 identified as tornadoes along with torrential rain storms. As you were aware the recruitment campaign for 2020 was cancelled due to covid, however I am pleased to report it will resume in spring 2021, ideally encouraging more young men and women to consider joining.

Of special concern to you and your members is Station 50. As we all know, the complement of volunteers is not there and the hall has been decommissioned. There was discussion as to what to do with the building, that conversation still persists as given the positioning of the building on the property, relationship to side yards and road allowance as well as the current zoning of the property makes it undesirable to sell or buyers. It's use and occupancy remains unclear at this time.

**Sinclair Residents Committee Update:** DC Peppard and I continue to be pleased given the support we have received by your lake representatives from all parts of our Ward who participate in these meetings. As with most things, due to covid, we are not able to meet again – yet, however I continue to maintain a healthy dialogue with residents in all parts of the Ward, informing our extended committee members regularly via e mails and addressing inquiries on an ongoing basis. Looking forward to being able to resume face to face meetings at 'Muskoka on the Rocks' later this fall, so stay tuned.

My big ask continues to be that our various association executives or secretaries consider sharing our reports to their memberships as well. The information is for the benefit of all residents.

On a related matter, DC Peppard and I sit on the District's Housing Task Force and like other programs and initiatives, that has been on hold, but later this month you will see us back together.

As always, I suggest to residents to go to the township website and download '**Agendas and Minutes**' to see what's the latest from Council [www.lakeofbays.on.ca](http://www.lakeofbays.on.ca)

**Final thoughts particularly on Roads and By-Law enforcement;**

Any concerns please contact the specific department directly, they welcome hearing from our residents and if the issue that can be addressed quickly, they will do their best to do so. In most cases the issues of Sinclair/Finlayson are somewhat different than other wards, geographically we are the biggest, more kilometers of roads, a greater number of lakes, more crown lands and arguably more issues. Our staff have been doing a great job through these 'covid times' to address concerns in a timely fashion, recognizing that until Stage 3 they were deployed to a job with one person per truck making every task that much harder. I can agree, things are not perfect, but then these are not perfect times, we need to continue to have patience, be respectful and remember these are still not normal times.

For service, check the website [www.lakeofbays.on.ca](http://www.lakeofbays.on.ca) to get to the correct department and call (705) 635-2272 ... or <https://forms.lakeofbays.on.ca/Report-it>

I must add, a couple of positive topics;

The recent flyer prepared by our By-Law Department in conjunction with staff is a must keep document, sharing the various areas of engagement and enforcement in the Township.

**(See attached)**

After consultation with our District Councillors, we have prepared a document and now released by the District to help clarify some inaccuracies about the transfer station.

**(See attached)**

***That's it for now...enjoy our spectacular fall season, prepare for the winter months that will give way to yet another great season here in Muskoka.***

***Any questions or concerns, please continue to let me know....***

All the best,

**Rick Brooks, Councillor**

***Sinclair / Finlayson Ward***

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