**REPORT TO WARD FOUR COTTAGE ASSOCIATIONS**

**July 23, 2021**

While we are all still being very cautious about COVID-19, the situation is gradually improving. We can enjoy the relative safety of our cottages where it is much easier to follow the health regulations. Our Canadian family members living in the States can now cross the border with limited restrictions on their movement. On August the ninth our fully vaccinated American neighbours will be able to come to their cottages.

Your Township is following the changing situation very closely. While the office remains closed there is much activity. For example in the first six months of 2021 the building dept. approved 158 permits, an increase of 70% over the Covid-affected number for 2020. The value of these permits was up almost 100%. The planning department is working on a number of issues and this month brought the first review of the new Zoning Bylaw to Council. This proposal includes all the suggestions from the public meetings over the past two years. To ensure we proceed prudently we will have a special meeting of Council for this one topic.

The Administration staff, amongst other projects, have completed the purchase of land and compilation of the data needed for the permits to build a new tower in Pointe au Baril to improve internet service to our residents in the north, building on the long –term plan to help all our residents access reasonable internet service. They have also made some changes to the noise bylaw so we can do a better job preventing noise from decreasing your enjoyment of your cottage and nature. We also had discussions with the LCBO to help ensure the two LCBO Convenience Outlets in the south continue to operate.

The Operations staff have been busy providing all the services you expect and monitoring the Covid situation. On Monday the 26th multiple boats will be allowed at the docks of the transfer stations on the Bay and the re-use centres will be open. They have also installed Seabins, purchased with the assistance of Georgian Bay Forever, at Pointe au Baril and Holiday Cove to skim plastic waste etc. off the surface of the water. I would be remiss if I did not mention that they won a Marshall Award, from the Association of Ontario Municipalities, for the way they worked with the Georgian Bay Biosphere and Shawaniga First Nation to protect the wildlife while resurfacing the Skerryvore Road.

Council continues its regular schedule of meetings, using Zoom instead of meeting in person. In my opinion this leads to more efficient meetings but they are not as effective as meeting in person. We were pleased to support our local MMP Norm Miller’s private members bill to abolish unencapsulated Styrofoam in docks (Our reeve, Bert Liverance, made a presentation to a committee of the Legislature) and we are also working to support another bill to limit the amount of microplastics entering our waters. At a more mundane level, we have replaced an old tax forgiveness policy with a new policy of grants to associations to support them in making some facilities and programs open to all residents.

Most of you probably do not know that our Township, with six other municipalities in West Parry Sound, financially supports a retirement home called Belvedere Heights. This month the governing body came to us with a proposal to combine our home with another one run by the hospital and create a “campus of care” on the hospital site. We regard this change as big improvement in service available in the Parry Sound area. The transition is expected to take about 5 years.

July 20th was a sad day for some residents of the Sans Souci area, and a wakeup call for many more, when a lightning strike hit a cottage which burned to the ground. It was very comforting to see how the community pulled together to extinguish the fire with no significant damage to the surrounding trees. Cottagers from all around came with their pumps to help. The big shout-out goes to the employees of the local contractors and businesses who led the firefighting effort. Many lessons were learned or relearned. Know what phone numbers to call. See more detail at the end of this message. Make sure your pump works. Make sure you know how to work it quickly and bring all the parts. Fortunately we set up a schedule for people to check the site after the fire was out. We needed to go back twice that evening to re-extinguish hot spots.

Let me close with something that is close to my heart. We are all very grateful for being able to get our COVID vaccine shots. But many people, especially those in the Third World, are not so fortunate. Until people everywhere are vaccinated we are going to be exposed to new waves of variants coming to haunt us. Please consider expressing your gratitude by going to the website of a charity called Love My Neighbour and pay it forward. There, for a contribution of just 25 dollars, you can buy two shots for a person in need. This is a Canadian charity that has partnered with UNICEF so you can be sure your donation is secure, tax deductable and the vaccines will be purchased and dispersed appropriately. I am proud to say that Council has voted to make the Archipelago a “Love My Neighbour Community”.

If you have any comments or concerns please contact our excellent Township staff or one of your Ward Four councillors: Alice Barton, Rick Zanussi or myself, David Ashley.

FIRE REPORTING

Our Township does not have a fire service so we recommend you talk to your neighbours about supporting each other in case of a fire or other emergency. You should also contact y0ur local cottage association as gthey may have some fire mitigation measures in place. For example the SSCS (Sans Souci and Copperhead Association) has a contract with Northern 911, a private company to spread the message about a fire. If you live in the SSCA area and call 1-844-868-0060, Northern 911 will send a text to people in proximity to the fire who have a fire pump and are on their list.

The WBCA (Woods Bay Community Association) also has list of phone numbers for people in their area who have fire pumps.

The MNRF will fight forest fires on crown land or that threaten crown land but they will not fight fires in structures. To report a forest fire, call the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) 310-FIRE (310-3473). No area code needed. Leave a message if you get an answering machine. They will need to speak to YOU and require you to provide more details. The operator will prefer to speak with a firsthand witness to gather important information – remember they are trying to assess and coordinate a response (probably by air) and details are important.