

Town Hall Meeting Ward 2 - Kawartha Lakes

**Friday, January 30th, 2004
Coboconk Lion's Hall**

1.0 Call to Order

Councillor Ric McGee called the meeting to order at 7:10 P.M.

2.0 Additions/Deletions to the Agenda

None noted.

3.0 Adoption of the Agenda

The agenda was adopted as printed.

4.0 Presentations:

4.1 Message from Parliament Hill

Councillor McGee advised that John O'Reilly, M.P. had called earlier in the day to say he would not be able to attend this evening.

4.2 Message from Queen's Park

Councillor McGee advised that Laurie Scott, M.P.P. had a previous engagement and sent her regrets but had a special notice for later in the meeting.

4.3 Minister's Question Update

Councillor McGee advised that Mayor Kelly's mother had just undergone hip surgery and therefore, Mayor Kelly was unable to attend tonight's meeting. Councillor McGee provided an update on the Minister's Question later in the Agenda.

4.4 Norland Water System – Wayne Hancock, P. Eng., Director of Public Works

Director Hancock introduced Dan Lynch, Manager of Water & Waste Water, and Bob LeCraw, P. Eng., from RAL.

Director Hancock advised that the Norland Water System is presently in the Environmental Assessment process and detailed design stage. He advised that the groundwater supply source was not viable so a surface water source will be used similar to what is there now. The estimated cost for this project is over \$2 million. The proposed tender date is August-September 2004 with construction taking place through 2005 and operational by mid 2005. The OSTAR application for the project is expected to be approved by mid-spring with 2/3 of the cost of the project to be covered – 1/3 by the federal government and 1/3 by the provincial government. The other 1/3 of the

costs will be a user rate issue and not tax dollars. He advised that the upgrade to the water system is legislated by the Province and there is a date at which time the system must be in compliance with the legislation. He stated that an extension would be required in order to comply with the timelines.

Q – What does OSTAR stand for?

A – Ontario Small Town and Rural Development

Q- will there be any expansion on the existing water system in Norland?

A – Only looking at the existing system for upgrade now – expansion could be looked at later through a capital program in 2005 – there would need to be a request from property owners to initiate an expansion of the water system.

Q – Will the source of water be the Gull River?

A – Yes.

Q – Will the upgrade affect the property owners who are drawing their water from the Gull River now?

A – The upgrade should not impact on their water supply.

Director Hancock introduced Bob LeCraw, P. Eng. from RAL, and asked him to explain the design process.

Mr. LeCraw explained the structural design process. He noted that there was not a sufficient quantity of ground water available; therefore, a surface water source would be used. A design overview information package will be mailed out to explain what is being proposed. The hope is a high quality system at the lowest cost. Mr. LeCraw explained that RAL has interest in the technology for the water system, therefore, they are removing themselves from the project and Totten Sims Hubicki will carry on with the engineering component.

Q – How many households will be involved?

A – 83 households with the possibility of extending to other areas – the \$425 flat rate covers the City's cost through the water user rate across the City

Q – Is there a secondary treatment process?

A – A new pump house will be constructed – the water will be filtered, by a process yet to be determined, which will remove 99% of the contaminants, then the water will be disinfected by chlorine.

Director Hancock advised that the City is required to test the chlorine on a daily basis plus remote line testing is now a requirement of the regulations. The result is that the users on the larger water systems in Kawartha Lakes, namely Lindsay, Fenelon Falls and Bobcaygeon, are helping to pay for the costs of the smaller water systems such as Norland..

Q – Will there be job opportunities at the pump house?

A – Regulations require testing – it will be a decision of Council.

Q – What will the capacity be when done?

A – The pumps will be able to handle more than 83 households and there is an opportunity to add more pumps as well.

4.5 Traffic Signals (Highway 35 and Kawartha Lakes Road 45) – Director Hancock:

Director Hancock advised that a letter dated January 20, 2004 had been received from the Ministry of Transportation advising the municipality of the status of the proposed traffic control signals installation at Highway 35 and Kawartha Lakes Road 45 intersection. The signalization project is on the Ministry's 2004 Capital Construction Projects list and as such the signals installation is being prepared for this construction season, however, the actual construction is subject to availability of funds and other regional priorities. At the present time the Ministry is proceeding with the preparation of the design documentation but the design process is being hampered by the lack of the existing underground infrastructure information. Unfortunately, the municipality is not in possession of either storm sewer or watermain plans in Norland. Director Hancock advised that he will be asking for a resolution from Council to put pressure on the Ministry to proceed with the construction this year as the traffic signals are needed and it is important to the area.

Councillor McGee advised that he had spoken with staff at the office of Laurie Scott, MPP, regarding this matter and she, in conversation with the Minister of Transportation anticipate the lights will be installed this year. Councillor McGee stated that the residents could put pressure on the Ministry of Transportation by sending letters in support of the traffic signals to MTO with a copy to the Mayor, Laurie Scott and himself.

Q – There is a real need for the traffic signals as many motorists use the Baseline Road in order to avoid the traffic congestion at 35/45!

A – MTO understands the need; it is just a case of the funding being available.

4.6 Seniors' Housing – Valmay Barkey, Community Care

Ms. Barkey thanked Councillor McGee for his initiative to hold a Town Hall Meeting and for the opportunity to speak about affordable housing for seniors. She advised that there has been a waiting list for affordable housing in the municipality for the last ten years. She advised that since last year's announcement from Chris Hodgson regarding the Affordable Housing Program partnership with the Federal Government, Community Care and individuals from throughout our municipality have been working together to explore any opportunity that the Program might offer to either revive dreams from the 1990's or create new dreams that are responsive to current housing needs. She acknowledged the efforts of citizens from the area, and in particular Bill Goard who was present at the meeting.

She advised that groups in Coboconk, Kinmount and Lindsay have helped in conducting surveys, which substantiates the need. The municipality's wait list of 200 seniors and a four-year waiting period for a one-bedroom apartment tend to support survey findings. She explained that there is such a climate of change with the federal and provincial levels of government that she cannot predict what might happen with the program.

There is a clear need for affordable housing in the area, so we need to be ready for action, however, there are many challenges to deal with.

One of these challenges is the need to meet the “new world order” which means that all sites must have access to water and servicing. To this end, a contract was recently signed with the firm Salter Pilon from Barrie to undertake a study to identify the plus/minus of five sites in the municipality – Coboconk, Kinmount, Lindsay, and Bobcaygeon and a fifth site. She noted that 70 Murray Street in Fenelon Falls has the largest wait list in the municipality because it has a support system, which is of great importance to many people.

She thanked Councillor McGee for his continued interest in the program.

Q – Where did the fact come from regarding 70 Murray Street wait list?

A – From the City of Kawartha Lakes Housing Authority.

Q – Do all the proposed sites have the required infrastructure in place?

A – Lindsay, Fenelon Falls and Bobcaygeon are the best suited as they already have water and sewers – Coboconk has sewers, but no water and Kinmount has water but no sewers.

Q – Somerville/Bexley set land aside by the old OPP building – why can't this be used?

A – The “new world order” requires that water and sewers be in place – the consultant is still looking at this site but some things are different now than they were before - the ground water supply in Coboconk will limit the number of units.

Q – What is Coboconk's sanitary sewage capacity?

A – The Official Plan deals with growth and it is a lengthy public process – the south/west quadrant of Coboconk has potential for some growth but it is limited.

Q – Where is the information that was handed over for the Coboconk site?

A – Community Care's office has the plans, proposal and drawings.

Q – Are the motions still in effect from the previous municipalities?

A – Councillor McGee will look into this. Yes, all previous motions are still in force under the Minister's Restructuring Order unless repealed by resolution of a Council that followed the original resolution.

4.7 Municipal Property Assessment Corporation – Mark Doble

Mr. Doble thanked Councillor McGee for inviting him to this Town Hall Meeting. He advised that his position with the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation is that of Customer Service Manager for the Peterborough/Haliburton/Kawartha Lakes area. He stated he is always pleased to take the opportunity to meet with groups like this in order to explain who MPAC is, what they do, and of course how best to proceed when you have questions about the assessed value of your property.

MPAC is a Not for Profit, non-share capital corporation that is funded by Ontario's 400+ municipalities. It is not a crown agency, and is not part of the Ontario government.

Over 4.2 million properties in Ontario are assessed by MPAC with a total assessed value of over \$1 trillion. This assessment is the basis for over \$16 billion in provincial education and municipal revenue. MPAC has an annual budget of approximately \$140 million, which makes them one of the most efficient tax systems in North America when you compare cost with the total revenue generated. MPAC's database contains over 2.4 billion elements and they employ 1,500 employees in 37 MPAC offices across Ontario.

In addition to determining the current value assessment for all properties in Ontario as legislated under the *Municipal Property Assessment Corporation Act*, MPAC also:

- delivers assessment rolls and supplementary rolls to municipalities
- performs triennial enumeration for municipal elections
- collects information for school support choices; French language education rights; voter identification; municipal & school board planning purposes; jury duty lists; and population reports

MPAC does not:

- determine assessment legislation (done by the Province)
- set local tax policy or collect taxes (function of the municipality)
- control the assessment appeal process (function of the Assessment Review Board under the authority of the provincial Ministry of the Attorney General)

MPAC's first province-wide reassessment was conducted in 1997 for taxation years 1998, 1999 and 2000. This reassessment was based upon a valuation date of June 30, 1996. A reassessment followed for taxation years 2001 and 2002 based upon a valuation date of June 30, 1999. Last year MPAC reassessed again using a valuation date of June 30, 2001 and they have just delivered their 4th reassessment using a base valuation date of June 30, 2003. Under provincial legislation, MPAC must conduct an annual reassessment.

All properties in Ontario are assessed at their "current value" which means in relation to land, the amount of money the fee simple, if unencumbered, would realize if sold at arms lengths by a willing seller to a willing buyer. This is the most common method of assessment in the world; used in every province in Canada and at least 128 other countries.

Mr. Doble advised that as the Manager for Customer Service for MPAC in Peterborough, his department is responsible for dealing with customer enquiries, responding to taxpayers' request for information, processing Requests for Reconsideration, vacancy rebate applications and defending values before the Assessment Review Board.

The Request for Reconsideration is an informal review of your property's assessment that must be submitted in writing any time throughout the year. There is no cost to the taxpayer to file an RFR. It is important that all reasons why you believe your assessment is incorrect be provided. You will only be contacted if additional information is required. As part of MPAC's review, they will compare your assessment to the values and sale of other properties in your area. Requests for Reconsideration that result in Minutes of Settlement are forwarded to municipalities so that they can update their

collector's roll. If you are unable to resolve your concerns through the RFR process, you have a right to appeal your assessment to the Assessment Review Board. An appeal must be filed by March 31 of the tax year under appeal. The Assessment Review Board charges a fee of \$50 for each residential/farm property appeal and \$125 for commercial and industrial properties.

At the Assessment Review Board, both the complainant and MPAC are required to present evidence and the decision of the ARB is final and binding to both parties for the particular tax year. When appealing your assessment, you need to focus on two important sections of the Assessment Act:

- 19.1 "The assessment of land shall be based on its current value..."
- 44.2 "In determining the value at which any land shall be assessed, reference shall be had to the value at which similar lands in the vicinity are assessed."

Most appeals filed do not end up before a Chairman. MPAC's job is to get an assessment right. It is not to win or lose. Often, MPAC is able to resolve complaints through minutes of settlement and sometimes they are able to provide sufficient understanding to a taxpayer to the extent that they decide to withdraw their appeal. Property owners now have unprecedented access to information that can hopefully assist in determining the fairness and degree of accuracy with respect to their assessment. Property owners are now entitled, free of charge, to obtain a Subject Property Profile on their property. This document outlines the detailed information that MPAC records indicate with respect to a property. Additionally, you may obtain a Comparable Report showing assessment information of up to six comparable properties in your vicinity. From this information, it is hoped that you can determine if your property is fairly assessed or if a mistake has been made. If you don't like comparable properties MPAC has chosen, you are also entitled (free of charge) to have a report produced showing up to six comparable properties of your choosing. Once you have this information, you can discuss any concerns with a Customer Service Representative from the MPAC office.

Last year only 182 Assessment Appeals were filed in the City of Kawartha Lakes. Considering there are over 40,000 properties, this is significantly low. MPAC can make mistakes, and the necessary mechanisms are in place to address these problems, however with each successive reassessment in the City of Kawartha Lakes, the product has seen continuous improvement in terms of value accuracy.

Q – Does MPAC prepare the voters list?

A – MPAC compiles information for the municipal voters list.

Q – How did MPAC get to this year's %?

A – MPAC does not trend values – the database has detailed information on every property in the City of Kawartha Lakes – the value is determined through sales.

Q – Is MVA new?

A - There has always been a kind of MVA in place since 1900, however, different municipalities used different base years across Ontario – now the Province has said that one-year must be used across Ontario.

Q – We have seen a 30-100% assessment increase in his area – this makes a big difference on the tax bill.

A – An increase in assessment does not mean there will be an increase on the tax bill – reassessment is revenue neutral – waterfront properties have increased and previously farm properties had increased – this is what the market shows.

Q – Concerned about what will happen with the tax bills – the Indian Point Homeowners Association needs Mark to come to their spring meeting – need reassurance from the municipality that taxes will not increase

A – Councillor McGee explained MPAC sets the tax base, the municipality sets the tax rate– it is a three fold process (MPAC – tax increase – area rating) – Council is looking at area rating more services, for example leaf pickup, Xmas tree pickup, street lighting, Police Service Boards – fire service have already been area rated.

Q – More work needs to be done on a lot of services regarding area rating.

Q – Does MPAC information show if a property is near a swamp i.e. West Nile Virus?

A – The market will take into account if a property is in a swampy area.

Q – What is the cut off date for filing an appeal?

A – March 31st as established by the Ministry.

Q – Is Balsam Lake considered a premium lake in the Kawarthas?

A – Yes – it is one of the cleanest lakes, has the highest elevation and there are very few remaining lots left in the area.

Q – Are properties on Balsam Lake assessed the same as in Muskoka?

A – No – the sales from Muskoka are not used when assessing properties on Balsam Lake.

Q – Is the list of variables that MPAC uses public information?

A – No – they are not easily comprehended, however, most people have a good idea what their property is worth.

Q – The appeal process is stacked against the taxpayer – where can information on other properties be found?

A – The process is not stacked against the taxpayer – all evidence that MPAC uses at an appeal is available to the taxpayer.

Q – Does the sale of a property dictate the assessment?

A – No – one sale does not dictate the assessment – have to deal with equity - all the sales in an area must be looked at to reflect the true value.

4.8 Ward 2 Boards & Committees

Councillor McGee explained that the municipality permits the establishment of local boards and committees to look after certain things, for example, the Carden Recreation

Centre Committee. There are opportunities available and any organization interested should speak with him.

Councillor McGee advised Council will debate a recommendation from the Corporate and Human Resources Committee to stop selling shoreline road allowances. He advised that he personally did not support this decision at Council, however, Councillor McGee believes that a majority of Councillors do.

Q – Are shoreline road allowances the same in every township?

A – No, some people have already purchased the shore road allowance between their property and the waterfront.

Q – Had a legal problem with their property on Shadow Lake and were told by their lawyer that Shadow Lake has no road allowances and that the property owners own right to the water?

A – Councillor McGee stated his property has a road allowance and he is on Shadow Lake. Property owners were encouraged to check their deeds to confirm ownership of shore road allowance.

Councillor McGee asked if Friday nights works for holding the Town Hall Meetings. He advised that he plans to hold meetings every three months, alternating between Coboconk and Norland. It was the consensus that Friday night is best for most people. It was agreed that it would be beneficial to have someone at the next Town Hall Meeting who could explain tax rates. It was also suggested that someone should come and talk about the airport in Lindsay.

Councillor McGee also explained that Council had held a preliminary budget meeting and were looking at a \$7 million budget increase. Council had asked staff to go away and come back with a zero percent increase. Council is taking a more business style approach to the operation of the municipality.

Councillor McGee then gave a brief summary of Council's meeting with the Minister of Municipal Affairs in Toronto on January 23rd. Some important points made by the Minister were:

1. there is no money available to restructure but could be made available
2. four of the former municipalities would not be viable in the previous county system
3. understood the need to make a decision quickly and would get an answer to Council "sooner rather than later"

Councillor McGee thanked everyone for coming to the first Town Hall Meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 9:20 P.M.