

July 2020

President's Report 2019/2020

Fellow property owners,

The purpose of this report is to provide you with an update on news and issues impacting us as property owners and to give you some information about what your association executive has been working on ahead of our July 18, 2020 annual meeting.

As a reminder, the AGM will take place on Saturday July 18th from 9:30 to 11:30am via a conference call.

If you have not already done so, please register for this call with our Secretary, Robin Priestly by sending her an email at robin@priestly.ca. Robin will send you the dial in number. As this is *not* an in-person meeting this year, pre-registration is critical to ensure a quorum, which is important given this is an election year. Your current executive, including myself as President, Mark McGee as Vice President; Robin Priestly as Secretary and Doug Roberts as Treasurer, have all agreed to stand for election for another two years.

We are saddened to advise of the passing of two of our fellow property owners over the winter; Don (Tubby) Frankland and Byron Graham. Tubby was a "Tea Lake pioneer" who changed the community of property owners on Tea Lake, by pushing for and developing Frankland Lane and Elva (named after Tubby's mother) Lane roads. Byron, son of Fred and Freda Graham, was on Tea Lake his entire life and our paradise was one of only a few places where he could get away from life's hectic pace. His passing at such a young age is a tragedy for his family and friends alike. We pass our condolences to Tubby's children, Don, Lynda, and Suzy as well as to Fred and Freda and Byron's wife Christina and their families and, continuing a long tradition, have made memorial donations to the Heart and Stroke Association in their names.

Your association continues to be committed to maintain and expand the working relationship with both Severn Township and Simcoe County & feel it is critical that these levels of government understand our issues and concerns as well as the importance of the \$500,000+/year tax base from Tea Lake. We have also been busy managing the associations affairs through the COVID-19 pandemic. Something as straightforward as the annual general meeting has resulted in hours of work and consultation to determine the best path forward for property owners. We hope those efforts have resulted in more communication; not less, and that, as property owners, you are as aware of the activities of the association as you have been in previous years. I would personally like to thank the executive and acknowledge the efforts of Doug Roberts, Mark McGee and especially Robin Priestly in keeping our affairs moving along despite a pandemic.

As you know, in 2019 we were successful in having Severn Township institute a complete fire ban on the crown land immediately west of Lavis Lane. This ban continues to be in effect and while it has not eliminated issues related to reckless or irresponsible camping in the arm, we believe it continues to be an important by-law for Severn Township to maintain. Unfortunately, that support may be wavering at the township. At the June 3, 2020 Council meeting, there was a closed session of the council and the topic of



our fire ban by-law was tabled following a similar review by the township corporate services committee. We are not sure of the details, but there is some reference to the threat of legal action against the township due to the existence of the by-law. To protect solicitor-client privilege, no details of those sessions are available, so we do not know the status of any legal challenge to the by-law. Following the closed session of council though, **a motion was made to abolish the fire ban. Fortunately, that motion was defeated, by a 4-3 margin, so the fire ban remains in place.** A second motion was then made to have the by-law *referred to staff to reduce the possibility of legal actions, including discussion with MNRF and amending the current by-law.* That motion passed 5-2. We would like to thank Deputy Mayor Jane Dunlop; our Councilor Mark Taylor, along with Councilors Betsworth and Valiquette-Thompson for objecting to the abolishment of the fire ban and for their continuing support in this matter.

On June 22nd we sent an email to the township, expressing our concerns about these developments and requested additional information as well as to be included in staff consultations. We also asked for the opportunity to speak directly to council to make our position on this matter clear. Our request was added to the agenda of the July 7th council meeting, but unfortunately a misunderstanding about our concerns dominated the discussion and our request to be involved in staff consultation and to present to council was not reviewed. We have subsequently contacted Councilor Taylor to discuss next steps and will advise as soon as we are able.

Effective July 9, there is a complete fire ban across Severn Township. This affects all residents in the township and includes a ban on any outdoor burning, including fire grates, fireplaces, or fire pits. Enforcement of *any* fire ban is restricted to the Severn Fire department, Severn Township's fire prevention officer and the OPP. If you see fires being burned you can call the OPP non-emergency line at **1 (888) 310-1122**. Please be careful not to provoke situations that might escalate. That is what the authorities are there for.

Ongoing concerns continue with garbage, our boat ramp and speed of traffic at the head of the lake. As a result of COVID-19, the Matchedash dump is closed due to safety concerns and no date has been provided on when the Matchedash dump will re-open. Severn Township has arranged a temporary solution with Simcoe County whereby anyone in possession of a Simcoe County dump permit, can take their garbage to the Baxter Lake transfer station out on Hwy. 400. Details are fuzzy, but we believe the same limit of one bag exists and additional garbage will incur a fee. **Leaving garbage at the end of our roads is not an alternative and is considered illegal dumping, subject to a hefty fine.** Additionally, we have written to Mayor Burkett, who is our Simcoe County council representative as well as the county road superintendent asking for radar speed sign where the limit drops to 50km/hr. and for some attention to the condition of the boat ramp including a request to post a "4 wheel drive" only sign.

Regrettably, we have decided to cancel the Tea Lake Regatta for 2020. Given the unpredictability of the pandemic, the need for social distancing and the reality of the significant time, effort and resources needed to host this event, your executive has concluded that it is in everyone's best interest to pass on the regatta this year. . It is our hope that we will be able to operate the Tea Lake Regatta again in 2021. On the assumption that the current fire ban is lifted between now and then, our plan is to move forward with a fireworks display on the August long weekend and would like to thank Rod Wright for once again



arranging for this fun event. If anyone wants to make a donation, please do so by July 21st by contacting Rod Wright at wright@bbsrealty.com.

In my view, lake stewardship is the prime purpose of our association's existence. This is a large and complex responsibility and needs to be where most of our cottage volunteer base focuses. I have asked our Vice President, Mark McGee, to coordinate all aspects of lake stewardship including maintaining several sub committees formed over the years, such as water testing and looking into lake levels and their relationship to the Severn River. Many thanks to Stu McGill who has helped Mark and I, as together we learn more about water management, both during the spring run-off season and as a power generation source throughout the year. Mark has sent a separate Lake Stewardship report to you with more details. We also want to thank Julie Whittley for coordinating our water testing efforts.

With regards to understanding the cause and effect of the water levels of our lake, we continue to liaise with the Severn River Association of Property Owners ("SRAPO") to coordinate efforts in dealing with Parks Canada, Orillia Power and Ontario Power Generation ("OPG"). These government entities control water flow and water levels in our area. We have been successful in receiving regular updates on water flows and water levels from OPG. Unfortunately, we do not have a loud voice with the Trent Severn Waterway ("TSW") who ultimately control water levels on the Severn, as they refuse to acknowledge their influence over the waters of Tea Lake. We have discovered that there is such recognition of Six Mile Lake which, like Tea Lake, is also not part of the Trent-Severn. Despite this, their association has a water management agreement with TSW because they are downstream from the Pretty Channel dam. We continue to meet and to strategize with SRAPO on levers we can pull to get TSW to recognize their influence over our lake.

Another lake stewardship concern is weed growth. Tea Lake has had weeds in it for as long as I can remember during my 60+ years on the lake. Unfortunately, water level contributes directly to weed growth as it is propelled when sunlight reaches the lake bottom. We know there are concerns among property owners about weeds on Tea Lake. We also know that there are other property owners who are equally concerned about the practicality and ecological impact of attempting to remove them. As you may recall, Eurasian Water-Milfoil is an invasive species that was identified in our lake during a 2018 FOCA Invasive Species Pilot project. You can find that report on our website. When the word "*invasive*" is used, it *does not* mean new to the lake. There is a long list of other species of plants that have inadvertently found their way to Ontario decades ago, but that are considered invasive because they are not native to our local environment and continue to propagate and spread.

That said, the eradication of Eurasian Water Milfoil while desirable, is not a trivial exercise. Our association was approached by one group to help, shortly after the pilot project work was published, but their eradication methods are chemically based, which your executive is strongly opposed to. Through FOCA, we have learned that other associations have raised funds to hire divers to carefully identify, remove and encircle known Eurasian milfoil outcrops. As you can imagine, this kind of manual and specialized effort costs tens of thousands of dollars and without significant funding, likely from both government and through fund raising, is beyond the financial reach of this association. However, if



collectively, the property owners of Tea Lake wish to band together and either fund or fund-raise for this project, your executive is supportive and will provide logistical and financial support where possible.

What we would require first off, is a volunteer team to work with Vice President, Mark McGee to come up with a proposal and budget. We have been successful in the past in forming sub-committees to do research, assess costs and present findings to property owners. We advocate use of this same structure to deal with any lake stewardship concerns that property owners deem necessary. We know there are also concerns about gypsy moths and other invasive plant life like Phragmites invasive grasses as well and we again recommend that concerned property owners form a recognized sub-committee within our association's governance model and structure. If you are interested in helping, on these or other concerns, please contact our Vice President, Mark McGee directly at mj3pines@gmail.com.

Your executive continues to liaise with and utilize the resources of the Federation of Ontario Property owners' Associations ("FOCA"). FOCA has been invaluable with lake stewardship concerns and as we navigate the legal boundaries that we need to be mindful of during this pandemic. I would also like to thank Heather Bird and Glenn Grunwald for their legal support to our many questions about what we can and cannot do during a pandemic!

We have recently completed an updated submission of our corporate filing to ensure our association's legal entity remains in good standing with the province. In addition, we will be asking for a motion at our AGM, following the presentation of our financial statements, to *waive* the Corporations Act (Ontario) requirement for financial audit. The act provides for the ability to waive an audit where revenues are less than \$100,000 and that such a vote receives super majority (80+%) support. We assume this to be a bit of a no-brainer, as an audit will cost us a significant sum of money to complete, but we need to formally record this in our minutes. This should become a standard motion at all AGM's moving forward. In preparation for our upcoming AGM, we are including last year's minutes, along with our financial statements and the lake stewardship report with this report. Beyond these documents, your executive continues to meet regularly, and all meeting minutes are posted on our website for your review. We continue to send welcome packages to new property owners. Through volunteers, we continue work on assembling materials for a coffee table picture book showing the history of our lake through the families who have been here for generations and hope to have this ready to show you soon.

As always, please use the lake responsibly and be considerate of your fellow neighbours. Among other things, this should include responsible and safe boating, reasonable noise levels, and limited use of outdoor lights at night, especially on or near the water.

On behalf of the Tea Lake Property Owners Association executive, as well as from Christina and I, we wish you a healthy, happy summer on Tea Lake. Enjoy!

Tea Lake Property Owners Association Inc.

Michael A. Collins
President