



# TOWNSHIP *Watch*

Box 336 Port Carling, ON P0B 1J0

(705) 765-0022 Fax (705) 765-0023 [tmira@muskoka.com](mailto:tmira@muskoka.com)

## **TOWN HALL MEETINGS:**

For four weeks, from early November, there were 13 Town Hall meetings called by Alice Murphy, our new mayor to hear the concerns of the taxpayers of our Township. These meetings were held in Port Carling, Bala, Torrance, Glen Orchard, Walker's Point, Minett, Foot's Bay, Windermere, Hekkla, Bent River (Ullswater), Raymond and in Toronto (Markham) as there was much concern about the difficulty of having "summer people" able to be at one of the meetings.

The Port Carling, Bala, and Torrance meetings were quite fractious (more about these in the New Year); the rest had individual concerns which had nothing to do with the larger centres. For the most part, they were quite positive and forward looking. The meetings in Bala and Torrance focused largely on the Bala Falls power plant, while the eastern boundary expansion was of concern at the Port Carling meeting. The other meetings tended to revolve around issues local to that area. The meetings in Muskoka attracted about 400 people in total, and the Markham meeting was attended by about 70 people for a grand total of 470 people.

## **COMMITTEE of ADJUSTMENT - December 13, 2010:**

This was the first meeting of our new Committee of Adjustment. Naturally, with 9 members out of 10 on our Council being newly elected, there are major difficulties and a very steep learning curve! Councillor Alan Edwards chairs this committee and has fortunately had experience with a C of A both here and at his former home. This expedited matters considerably. Staff is very helpful at assisting the new councillors as they get up to speed. This committee is comprised of 5 members – Councillors Alan Edwards, Brad Burgess, Mayor Alice Murphy and non-councillors – Carol Anne Robinson and Susan Benson; 3 from Ward A and 2 from Ward B. Unfortunately no one was selected to represent Ward C, although at least 2 people from Ward C had applied for this position.

## **COUNCIL - December 14, 2010:**

This was a fairly confusing meeting.

There were 9 individuals or groups wishing to delegate on the Bala Falls Project alone. At the start of the meeting, the Mayor recused herself because of her involvement in the opposition campaign and declared a pecuniary interest. Two other councillors also recused themselves on lesser issues, but nonetheless, they did the right thing. Just before the delegations were to be heard, the CAO, Walt Schmid, announced that the delegations on Bala Falls would have to be rescheduled to January 18 to accommodate other councillors consulting their solicitors! What ensued was a period of pandemonium.

When the meeting resumed, by-laws and reports were dealt with.

## **COMMITTEE of the WHOLE - December 15, 2010**

This committee is comprised of all the councillors and the Mayor. The Planning Committee of the past has been rolled into this committee, as have been:

- Planning and Visioning (this includes planning , visioning, economic development and communications),
- Public Works (roads and infrastructure),
- Corporate Services (finance and administration), and
- Community (community centres, emergency management, volunteers, parks, trails and libraries)

In addition to the scheduled agenda items, this committee hears delegations from the public – there were a total of 9 listed on the agenda. The committee also considered 4 by-laws and 17 reports from staff or community centres.

One of these delegations was concerned with a downtown Port Carling development project. This property is at the corner of Ferndale Road and Hwy. 118 – the “M” property. The concern was the density, parking and how to handle the stream which runs through the property. After much discussion the issue was DEFERRED.

Another delegation described the possibility of having at least one Nurse Practitioner in the Township. This prospect was received with enthusiasm and Alan Edwards and Bob McTavish will be spearheading this project.

Steve Fahner, head of the Planning Department of the Township, brought the planning issues to the Planning chair, Ruth Nishikawa. These decisions are always lengthy because they must be done in depth to be fair.

Next came Finance, chaired by Brad Burgess. Julie Stevens, treasurer, brought her report re the 2011 budget guidelines which the committee did not pass since the Council felt it needed to be reviewed. DEFERRED.

Finally on the subject of the Bala Falls Project, Committee requested an extension of the 30 day review period for further studies and legal advice, and also authorized \$10,000.00 for the studies and legal advice to bring the new councillors up to speed on the complexities of Bala Falls, and potential conflicts of interest...

This meeting began and ended in the dark (9:00 am to 4:45 pm), too long to be productive.

## **District Council - December 13, 2010**

The items on the Agenda were the introduction of the new District Councillors (14 of 22 had not been councillors before), and the selection of the District Chair. The incumbent Gord Adams, and the former mayor of Gravenhurst, John Klinck, were seeking this office. The selection required 3 rounds of voting, since the first two were tied at 11 – 11 and the third was 10 – 12 in favour of John Klinck.

In his Inaugural remarks, the New Chair announced his Committee Chair appointments (we wonder how they all knew ahead of time). The new Chairs are as follows: Corporate and Emergency Services – Alice Murphy, Mayor of the Township of Muskoka Lakes; Planning and Economic Development – Lori-Lynn Giashi-Pacini. Neither of these two have had any prior experience on District Council and Ms. Giashi-Pacini works in Real Estate (whatever happened to conflict of interest?), Engineering and Public Works – Bob Colhoun from Gravenhurst, and Community Services – Fran Coleman from Huntsville. Scott Young, who does have considerable experience in Bracebridge and District Councils, is the Deputy Chair.

## **Summary**

You may wonder at the considerable length and depth of this report (we hope you do). This is the beginning of a new 4 year term for a largely new Township Council and it is really off to a very rocky start.

Our interest in these matters is not just curiosity, although there is some of that. Our main concern, focus and target is Good Governance for all our Ratepayers. And that does not mean a promise of transparency followed by shadowy, unexplained back-room deals. It appears as if some of Big City politics with its deals and dirty tricks is coming to Muskoka. Is this what you want? For us, it does not qualify as good governance. It makes us sad.

Therefore, the 3 of us, Susan DGLISH, our President, Pat Sinclair, and I (Madeline Fielding) will continue to audit and monitor these meetings and keep you informed through our Township Watch.