

SRA Newsletter January, 2008

The cold and snow of January are now upon us. We had good snowfalls before Christmas and then lost it. It is now snowing and blowing but there is little snow on the roofs. This can change quickly as you all know. Luckily we have not had very high winds and little tree damage so far. This newsletter is a little late as development charges are being debated at council and we wanted to get the final outcome to you. We have posted key SRA submissions on our web site at www.southamptonontario.org and there is a new on line paper called The Saugeen Times at www.saugeentimes.com. It is edited by Sandy Lindsay and is updated continually. It is worth reviewing on a regular basis.

Development Charges

Late Breaking News – Council passed the Development Charge Proposal on March 3. It is effective March 4.

Several council meetings have been held to gain public input into re-introducing development charges. Ken Robertson made a presentation for the SRA to Council on Dec 12 supporting their immediate implementation. The developers and the Chamber of Commerce are opposed but residents are in favor. The consultants have updated their previous report from over three years ago and reached similar conclusions. The main points are important to us all:

- The Town's long term planning is based on a net population increase of 2137 people and 1085 new residences or condos over the next 10 years, and 3873 population increase and 2005 new residences over the next 20 years. This is only a small reduction over the current rate of 100 to 130 new places a year.
- To support this new development, the Town can see the need to spend \$31.7 million for all the necessary expanded services. The Provincial Act allows about 40% to be recovered as development charges or \$12.6 million. The balance would come from grants (\$6.1 million) but the balance of about \$13 million would still have to come from property taxes over and above what we are paying today.
- The study shows how many additional costs are needed as a result of development. An example is a new sewage lift or pump to service the new subdivision behind the Independent. It could cost \$6.7 million!
- The biggest areas of future expenditure relate to storm water, roads and recreational services.
- Ron Brown made some interesting points at the Council meeting. The Town now spends about \$16 million per year on operating and capital costs. At 3% inflation, they need an extra \$500,000 to stand still. Additional taxes on 130 homes built in 2007 will yield about \$300,000 and so they need the revenue. The choice is either a mix of development charges and property tax increases or much steeper increases in property taxes.

It all seems self evident to the SRA that development charges are needed and inevitable. The level can be adjusted if there is a negative impact.

The level of charges recommended by the consultants was \$8448 per new house. Staff are suggesting \$4000 immediately and increasing by \$1000 per year to reach \$8450 in five years.

Ken Robertson's presentation is available on our web site and all the consultants and staff reports are on the Town's web site www.town.saugeenshores.on.ca.

Southampton Town and Beach Issues

Many issues have been raised by residents at the Annual Meetings of the SRA and directly to the executive. We had several discussions with Town staff in the Fall and have resolved some of these issues and clarified others for further study and work. We made a presentation to Council on Jan 14 to report on this progress. In general, we have found council and staff more receptive to our concerns and a good spirit of co-operation now exists. Bill Jones, Director of Public Works has been very helpful. Key points of interest are:

- Better notice and information on new developments. The Mayor is working with the County to place all new development proposals on the County and Town web sites immediately on filing. PAC agendas where new development and zoning changes are reviewed are now on the Town web site. We have asked the Town to advise the SRA and other groups directly as well. This would avoid important issues from sliding through the system.

- New beach grass plantings between the cross streets. As recommended by the Peach report, we agree with the program to reduce sand loss from the beach as long as a new protocol is established to control the future heights of these new plantings. The Conservation Authority is negative to doing this but we have asked the Town to work out a sustainable long term plan. There are already problems at the foot of Chantryview and Harmer St.

We pointed out that the Harmer St residents have historical pictures showing the dunes did not exist anywhere near their current condition where their views are restricted. They rightly point out they are taxed for lakefront but cannot see the lake. We will continue to press the Town and Conservation Authority to develop a sustainable dune protocol.

- Removal of sand from Chantry Dunes and Island St Walkways. Bill Jones says this will be done in 2008 with a mini excavator. We support his 2008 budget request.
- Grading of the main beach. A new plan was implemented last summer to grade the beach before each long weekend and only as needed due to storms in the intervening period. This seems to be a good compromise and the Town and the SRA members will monitor it again this summer.
- Sidewalk Sweeping. This was regularly done last summer and has controlled the sand accumulation problem.
- Water Quality and Testing. The Grey Bruce Health Unit is responsible for sampling and testing lake water along the beach. The Town will ask the Health Unit to spread out and diversify the tasting to be more representative of the whole beach. We are asking the Town to join us in being an advocate for better testing.

- Storm Water Drains. The Town feels there isn't a problem with the quality of storm water run off from housing developments but bacteria can grow in the drainage swales before the water reaches the lake. They intend to maintain the ditches better by regarding and straightening them out along the shore. We doubt that this will work consistently and have asked the Town to look at extending all beach drains over a period of time right out into the water. This will not be cheap but would provide a long term solution to a problem that will get worse as the lake level drops.
- Common Reed problem. The Town is to be commended for taking prompt action but there needs to be a better way of cutting the growth rather than by hand. They are looking into this.
- By-Law enforcement. The Town held a seminar to gain public input on all aspects of policing. Ken Robertson was a facilitator and Lorne Shantz attended it. Council will consider a budget request to fund a by-law officer for 2008 to be supervised by the Police.
- Outstanding issues. We are still trying to get answers to the Copway ditch and lighting issues on the North Shore as well as better traffic modeling.

Our full presentation is on our web site www.southamptonontario.org. It was well received by council, staff and the press.

Around the Town

- The Southampton 150th Anniversary Committee is working hard and is looking for more volunteers to help on individual events. If you can help, please give me a call at 519 797 1789. A brochure of key events follows on the next two pages.
- Some residents will have received new assessment notices. These are only going to owners whose properties have changes hands or classification, been adjusted due to an appeal or have undergone structural changes. Everyone else's assessment will remain at the previous 2005 level for this year. The Province has yet to decide on the future of Fair market assessments.
- A new 50 unit condominium building has passed zoning. It will be located on the south side of High St overlooking Fairy Lake and east of the Southampton United Church. It will be five stories high facing High St and four stories on the rest of the site.
- The Waterfront Committee of the Town are planning to create a waterfront master plan to guide future changes and development. Jane Kramer sits on this committee and will keep us informed on this program as it evolves.

- Lake levels are at record lows and will likely drop further as there is little ice cover on the lake. Lake Superior is also at the lowest level since the first records were taken in 1860. The initial report from the International Joint Commission says that the St Clair River bed is fairly stable and doesn't look as if it is actively being lowered, which would cause lake levels to drop. These early conclusions are being challenged by the Georgian Bay Association. The last dredging was done in 1962 and caused the lake to drop 45 cm.
- The Park and Trails committee has asked council for funding to develop the Copway Trail from Chippewa Golf Club down Copway across Hwy 13 and to the Lake. Hopefully some accommodation can be made to solve the other problems on Copway.
- This committee and the Saugeen Rail Trail committee are also recommending that a park be developed adjacent to the new Trail Head on Grosvenor and named the Nancy Forsyth Memorial Park. The park will in honor of her many years of community service to the Town.
- Martin's are expanding the bicycle store by the Bake Shop.
- The Lake Huron Centre for Coastal Conservation is holding its fifth conference on lake aspects 'Is the Coast Clear' at the CAW Centre in Port Elgin on May 23, 2008. It will be very informative. Check their web site www.lakehuron.on.ca.
- The renovations of the Southampton Art School are well underway and will be completed in time for the summer program. It is good to see this old historical building being updated and preserved. The opening ceremony is planned for June 7th and 8th – details to follow.
- As you all can see, construction continues at a record pace in 2007. There were 134 new single family dwellings completed last year as well as 106 multi-residential units built. Commercial was also strong with the new Shoppers Drug Mart which opened in January, Crabby Joe's in Port and Tim Horton's in Southampton.
- The Town is proceeding with the upgrade to the Port Elgin Public Library and fundraising is now in full swing.
- The Town has purchased the old supermarket building beside the movie theatre which after renovating, will house a medical clinic for Port Elgin.

Tim Andersen for the Board. January 28, 2008