

WARD TWO – UPDATE

June 19, 2020

From: Jo Morphy, Town of Gravenhurst, Ward Two Councillor

First off, I am sorry we are unable to get together at your AGM this year. At these gatherings, I get a lot of feedback and questions from the Lake Associations and their members. The questions and comments are thoughtful and always convey how deeply you care about our little part of the world.

In case you are ever in need to reach out to me, my phone number is 905-479-8927 and my email is joanne.m@rogers.com. I live on Parkers Point Road so please just consider me a neighbour and friend. I would gladly like to help if I can.

I am going to try and limit my input here to topics other than Covid-19 as I am sure the numerous and ongoing updates from the Town will be more comprehensive than what I can even attempt to address. In this Update, I will stick to local items.

Roadside “Brushing”

I receive loads of comments and questions about this subject. “Brushing” is the term given to an event whereby the Municipality brings a monster truck with over-sized “sheers” to remove excess foliage from beside local roads. The truck uses these arms to mechanically chew and grind all foliage including trees and branches that are within about 10 – 15 feet (3 – 4 metres) of the sides of the road. It is ugly and to many, worrisome. After it is done, it looks like a tornado touched down. People ask me why they must do this. In fact, my road was “attacked” two years ago, and the Loon Lake Road was “brushed” this past summer.

In discussions with the Town and the District, I am told the following:

- it helps make room for snow removal and storage in the winter;
- In summer, it prevents wildfires from jumping across roads and acts like a firestop;
- It improves sightlines for vehicles on cottage roads which often twist and turn;
- It addresses overhead clearances where applicable and it reduces tree branches from hitting hydro lines or falling limbs on the road itself.

Most of the debris remains on site and I can assure you from my personal experience that everything will look far better next Spring. If it doesn't, I am sure I will hear from you. “Brushing” is a common practise with most Municipalities, it is done every few years to keep our roads safe.

Bike Lanes & Resurfacing of Bay and Brock Streets:

The District of Muskoka has budgeted to repair the Bay and Brock Street sections of Highway 169. On its own, some of you might find this newsworthy and others may not.

To me, this sounds like a great opportunity to make the case to the District of Muskoka that there is a desire to create bike paths throughout our area. The first step would be to try and get bike lanes from Gull Lake Park to North Muldrew Road to be included with this Capital Project. If this is accomplished, we can then hope to create a network of Municipal Roads with bike lanes that link up to the District Road which would get us from the Wharf to the Library, Opera House, Downtown Core and the Centennial Centre.

In case “Road Ownership” is foreign policy to you, in Gravenhurst, we have roads that are owned and maintained by the District of Muskoka, and others that are owned and operated by the Town of Gravenhurst. Hwy 169 is a District Road.

Accessible Docking at The Wharf:

In my previous role as a lake association president, I was often asked about Accessibility at the Town Docks. (Not just the Wharf). Early each year, the Town prepares and then seeks passage of an Annual Budget. During this process, I made a Resolution to explore the feasibility of installing some form of mobility challenged device to help people get in and out of their boats at the Wharf. As you know, these docks stand tall above the water and are often difficult for people to get safely in and out. The motion passed and it is now in the hands of the Accessibility Committee. I am keenly looking forward to seeing what they come up with. In recent years, I have seen rails installed but in this high profile and highly used location, I would like to see a lift installed, like the ones that are used by people to get in and out of swimming pools. If any of you have any knowledge on the topic and would like to share it with me, it would be greatly appreciated.

I hope you are noticing a common theme. Residents are listened to. If you support certain items or wish to see other ideas considered, please reach out and let me know.

Drive-In Theatre:

This is just a reminder that the local Drive-In on Doe Lake Road has reopened and is considered a safe form of entertainment for the family. It is also being considered for many other venues:

- Concerts, both live and on-screen.
- Meetings and AGMs.
- Speaker Series.

Electric Vehicle Charing Stations:

Good news. We have our first EV-charging stations being installed in Gravenhurst. They are currently under construction in the Sobeys parking lot. They are being installed by Skyline, a developer with big plans for the area. Before I leave this topic, some background. Last August, I attended to Association of Municipalities of Ontario conference in Ottawa. One of the workshop sessions that I attended was being done by OPG/Hydro One. After hearing about electric-vehicles and the need to build an infrastructure to support them, I unabashedly stayed behind and asked (begged, pleaded) for them to consider

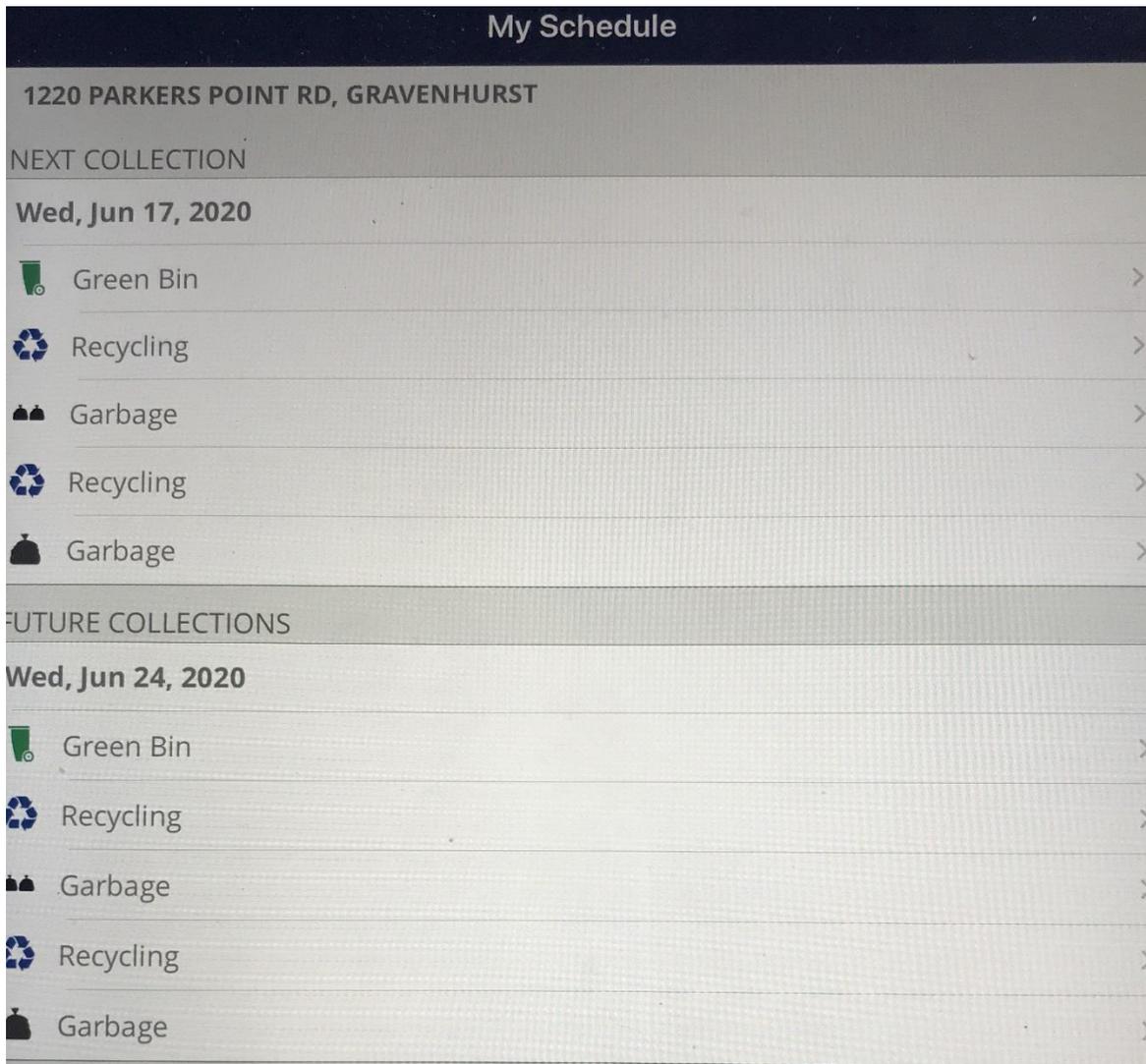
Gravenhurst as part of their beta roll-out. Now I will get to see if they are as popular as I am told they will be! I have attached a picture of a set of plans taken from my phone so forgive the quality 😊



Waste and Recycling:

Waste and recycling are also a District responsibility, but we get asked about it frequently. Beyond specific concerns you may have, my favourite information source is a new app that the District has put out called Muskoka Recycles and it is free. You can find it on Google Play or as I did, the App Store. It will ask for you to type in your address and will display your collection schedule as well as what can be collected in each of your blue, green and garbage bins. A neat function if you are ever not sure of how to dispose of an item. Now, you can search it. I put in “mattress” and it responded this is not available for curbside collection and went on to list the closest Landfills and Transfer Stations.

This is an example of a screenshot of what the app looks like when I tried it:



I am also aware that the Islanders are feeling quite forgotten when the Province mandated that all unmanned bins will be removed by 2023. The District has had their Town Hall meetings and received

their responses to their surveys on the topic. It is my hope that the solution they come up with will be well thought out and will provide our Island neighbours with a reasonable solution.

Breaking news** Just yesterday at the Mayors Webinar put together by the MLA, Mayor Phil Harding who is also the Chair of the District Public Works Committee, told us that they will be servicing three marinas with garbage trucks on Sundays. They will be at the marina for a period of two hours each. I am waiting for a complete list but for now that seems to be the solution.

G.A.P. / Gravenhurst Against Poverty:

Thank you to all who supported the Coldest Night of the Year in February which raised \$50,000 for the charity. The turn-out was amazing and it looked like everybody had a great time. I am the Council Representative on the Committee and they really do a good job at providing food security to those residents of Gravenhurst living under the poverty line. To compliment all the other great efforts of this amazing organization, volunteers are actively working on growing vegetables in our 16 G.A.P. Gardens located around Gravenhurst. With the warmer weather, they are starting to bloom. If you have a green thumb or simple want to help, we are always looking for gardening volunteers!

www.gravenhurstagainstpoverty.com

Gravenhurst Chamber of Commerce:

Honourable Mention - I need to mention the efforts of the Chamber and its members. As we all know, 2020 has been a challenging and unusual year. The Chamber has really stepped up as a supplier of timely and relevant information. For everything going on within the Town, please visit:

www.gravenhurstchamber.com

The 'Elephant in the Room':

I will close my Update by addressing the often discussed and debated topic involving Covid-19 and its impact on 'seasonal' vs. 'permanent' residents. It has become a very polarizing issue with people taking strong positions. You have all heard various media reports over the past three months. You may believe Muskoka Townships handled the messaging beautifully or you may have concluded that they handled it horribly. Problem is, we will most likely never know. I expect you are curious to hear where I stand.

When the Prime Minister ordered the return of all Canadians to come back to Canada, some (and I emphasize some) persons with tans within the 14-day self-quarantine period, were showing up at local stores. Shop keeps were nervous. We all were unsure. In my heart of hearts, I do not believe anything was done intentionally or maliciously but it did create a bit of a panic for local residents. It was right after the Florida Spring Break parties were being shown all over the news and the infection rate in Florida seemed to be sky rocketing.

The declared "pandemic" by the W.H.O. also caused people to begin hoarding which caused a run on the shelves in our local grocery stores. The situation was intensified when March Break suddenly

became three weeks instead of one. Rental Units were in high demand and seasonal unit holders were asking for an earlier start to their normal summer rentals. In time, this all worked its way through the supply lines but in the beginning, all of us were dealing with the fear of the virus and a perceived shortage of food. Now that we have all self-isolated, and most importantly continue to follow the rules, I hope that these fears are gone.

Two quick stories of people who did the right thing. First, the tale of two sons of a Toronto-based family who flew into Pearson in early April from California where they both have jobs. Their parents loaded up the trunk of their car with non-perishable foods and left it at Pearson. The boys drove to their cottage, reached out to friends for ongoing food delivery and stayed put until their 14 days had passed. Well done!

Secondly, I had a lady who flew in from Arizona but did not have friends or family to rely on. She tried online grocery shopping, but our local stores were backed up for a week or more. She called her church and the Minister contacted me. She hadn't eaten for 3 days. She was crying and fearful but wanted to come home to Muskoka and do the right thing. We got her connected to our volunteer delivery program called Caretagion. We brought her food and began routine delivery during her isolation. This is yet another example of how I know that the vast majority of our residents, both permanent and seasonal have behaved properly during these very uncertain times.

Currently, our American neighbours are lobbying to get permission to cross the border, provided they own property in Canada and will agree to self-isolate for fourteen days should they be successful.

It's a pleasure to be your local Councillor here in Gravenhurst and I will end my update by saying:

Welcome Home!