

## OTTER LAKE RATEPAYERS' ASSOCIATION ("OLRA")

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

MAY 23, 2021

#### **COVID-19 PROTOCOLS**

COVID-19 protocols necessitated a virtual Annual General Meeting.

There were 42 locations logged into the meeting.

#### **QUORUM**

Upon confirming that a quorum of members and Board Directors was present, the meeting was called to order by the Meeting Chairperson, Kerry Mueller, OLRA Board President, at 9:02 AM.

#### **WELCOME**

Kerry Mueller, OLRA Board President, made introductory remarks and introduced speakers and guests:

- Ann MacDiarmid, Mayor of Seguin Township
- Daryle Moffatt, Ward 1 Councilor
- Art Coles, Ward 2 Councilor
- Tianna Burke, Georgian Bay Biosphere Reserve
- Jason Inwood, CAO, Seguin hopes to join in as a guest
- Terry Rees, Executive Director, Federation of Ontario Cottagers Associations (FOCA) hopes to join in as a guest
- George Kostiuk, President, Salmon Lake Ratepayers' Association hopes to join in as a guest

The Board Directors and Board Secretary were introduced to the membership.

#### **2020 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING MINUTES**

**Approval:** The minutes from the July 19, 2020 Annual General Meeting as posted on the OLRA website were approved by electronic vote by 100% of the members present.

#### **TREASURER'S REPORT**

**2020 Financial Statements:** AJ Mueller, OLRA Board Treasurer, presented the 2020 Financial Statements. 2020 Net Income was \$6,667. Highlights included:

- **Assets:** Operating Funds were \$18,363, the Reserve Fund was \$39,413 and the Environmental Fund was \$14,045 for Total Financial Assets of \$71,821 as at December 31, 2020. Total Financial assets have increased year over year since 2018.
- **Revenue:** Membership Revenue was \$6,365, Reserve Fund Donations were \$933, Environmental Fund Donations were \$1,265, BBQ Ticket Sales was \$0, Newsletter Advertising was \$2,030 and Interest Income was \$1,012 for Total Revenues of \$11,605 as at December 31, 2020. While, Newsletter Advertising Revenue was higher in 2020 than in previous years, lower BBQ Ticket Sales resulted in lower revenue.
- **Expenses:** BBQ expenses was \$0. Other Expenses were \$4,938 for Total Expenses of \$4,938.

**Membership Highlights:** AJ Mueller, OLRA Board Treasurer presented Membership Highlights:

- As at December 31, 2020, there were 171 Primary Members and 247 Additional Family Members for a Total Membership of 418.
- As at May 22, 2021, there were 137 Primary Members and 201 Additional Family Members for a Total Membership of 338. This represents a 17% increase in numbers for the same time last year and more are expected in the mail.

**Approval of 2020 Financial Statements:** The Financial Statements as presented were approved by 100% of the members present.

**2021 Key Metrics, as at May 22:** The Treasurer presented highlights of Key 2021 Metrics to date:

- Anticipated Year End Surplus is expected to be \$1,000, considering budgeted and year to date revenue and expenses.

## **STEWARDSHIP REPORT**

Brad Chittick, OLRA Board Director, presented the stewardship program. Highlights included:

- **2020 Lake Partnership Program Water Quality Results:** The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks suspended the program in early 2020, until late 2020 due to COVID-19. The OLRA submitted one sample in May 2020 and one in October 2020. Results for phosphorous and calcium were not yet published and not available for the 2021 AGM. Secchi Visibility measurements for water clarity were conducted in 2020 as planned on Little and Big Otter Lakes. There is no significant change in Secchi Visibility measurements year over year.

- **2020 Benthos Observation Report Highlights:** “Bugs in the mud” or benthic macroinvertebrates are diverse small and microscopic animals which live on the bottom of the lake. The type of species and numbers are key indicators of Otter Lake’s health, “canaries in the mine”. Benthos are an important part of the food chain including amphibians, fish, birds, otters, and other animals that live in, on and around the lake. There are 3 sampling sites: site #1 near the boat launch on Little Otter Lake, site #2 at the end of the short arm of Otter Lake and site #3 near an undeveloped shoreline on Otter Lake. Data is collected, identified, and counted. 2020 data, with 15 species identified and a total count of 973, was not significantly different from 2019 data, with 16 species identified and a total count of 962. 2021 sampling will provide for a third year of observations and enough data to compare with other lakes in the region.

**Recommendations for Property Owners and Cottagers:**

- Maintain current angling regulations for fish, such as regulations for lake trout (40-55 cm protected slot size, winter closure).
  - Maintain and restore natural shorelines.
  - Get involved in citizen science programs such as invasive species reporting, IceWatch (when ice is formed and melts), FrogWatch, and Canadian Lakes Loon Survey.
  - Be mindful and respectful of animal life on the lake such as loons, and their chicks.
- **2021 Water Quality Testing Program:** The Lake Partnership Program has been reconstituted by the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. Sample analysis by the Dorset Environmental Science Centre will proceed. OLRA will conduct Secchi visibility readings and water quality samples monthly during the “Open Water” season. Dissolved O<sub>2</sub> testing will take place in late August or early September prior to lake-turnover (temperature de-stratification). Benthos observation sampling conducted by Georgian Bay Biosphere will take place on July 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021 on Otter Lake, and July 6<sup>th</sup> on Little Otter Lake. Seguin Township paid for sites #1 (Little Otter Lake) and #2 (Big Otter Lake) and OLRA paid for site #3 on Big Otter Lake.

**Invitation for Interested Property Owners and Cottagers:** Drop in by boat on July 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> 2021 from 8 am to 3 pm at 314 Blue Lake Road, at the end of the Short Arm, to see the sorting and identifying of benthos.

- **Little Otter Lake- Otter Lake Narrows Navigability:** In 2020 four OLRA members spent a day removing the buildup of brush and debris from the narrows. OLRA investigated the legality of removing the old piers and received permission from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forests to cut the old piers without disturbing the lakebed. OLRA is investigating how to accomplish this.

**LOON REPORT**

Kerry Mueller, OLRA Board President, advised that in 2020, only two loon chicks survived the summer on Otter Lake. 5 eggs were laid by 3 loon families (2 on Otter Lake and 1 on Little Otter Lake). 3 eggs did not hatch. In 2021, 3 pairs of loons have been spotted to date (2 on Otter Lake and 1 on Little Otter Lake). All three loon platforms are set; however, last year, 2 of the 3 loon pairs nested on low natural shores. Thank you for sharing photos and watching out for our loons!

**Recommendations for Property Owners and Cottagers:** Boat watchfully with low wakes to not swamp the nests and chicks. ***Small grey loon chicks are hard to see and cannot dive.***

## **GUESTS**

**Ann MacDiarmid – Mayor of Seguin Township:** Comment Summary:

- While our COVID cases are low, we cannot let our guard down to stop community spread. Phase 2 is expected by July 1, depending on the number of cases in the province and % of people vaccinated. If in mid-June, over 50% have been vaccinated, we hope to get the second vaccine scheduled sooner. You can book your second shot now if in Simcoe-Muskoka. Second shot bookings are expected in the next 2 weeks for North Bay-Nipissing.
- Taxes are going up 0.5% or an average of \$8.79. There are new programs such as improving seasonal roads.
- Vianet will be delayed to 2022. There is a meeting with Vianet regarding the two new tower sites. Seguin Council did not approve the location being proposed. An OLRA member asked about Starlink. The Mayor indicated that Starlink is charging \$130.00 deposit for sign-ups and that they expect to be oversubscribed in 2021 due to demand, if not available in 2021, then by 2022.
- Public trails will be linked as part of a long-term Integrated Trail Strategy and made safe for walking, biking, snowmobiling and ATVs. Trails help economic development.
- We are getting lots of feedback for and against short-term rentals and Council is gathering new information from a total ban to licensing.
- Support Local Businesses. Restaurants and tourism are hurting. Support where you can such as take outs and pick up.

**Daryle Moffatt - Ward 1 Councilor:** Comment Summary:

- With regards to the long-term Integrated Trail Strategy, there will be public consultation carried out by WPS consultants. An OLRA member mentioned that dogs must be kept on a leash.
- He is on the Official Plan Steering Committee looking at Health Living, Economic Development, etc. The timeline is longer than expected. Next steps will include public consultations later this year with the goal of sending the Plan to the Ministry this year for spring 2022 implementation.
- Summer maintained roads are expected to have year-round access over time.

- There was staff turnover in Planning and Billing. Jason Inwood is a positive change.
- Daryle Moffatt is available by email. Anyone can ask to be signed up to his regular e-news.

**Art Coles – Ward 2 Councilor:** Comment Summary:

- Be mindful when walking on roads. Keeps dogs on a leash and slow down around walkers. Slow driving signs were put on James Bay Junction.
- Otter Lake Road will be year-round, as well as other roads. These support local businesses.
- Rose Point Trail will be part of the overall trail system.
- Seguin is the largest supporter of Belvedere Long Term Care, at 37%. Belvedere Long Term Care lost its CEO. They have now formed a relationship with West Parry Sound Health Centre, which is now managing it. This allowed \$250 K from reserves to be returned to Seguin Township resulting in the lower tax increase. COVID taught us a lot. No residents got COVID. Two staff got COVID and quarantined. Currently working with Sudbury based consultants to investigate how to better use the site to allow for “stay at homes” and “individual dwellings” in addition to long term care. Belvedere is relying on the latest knowledge and wants to be prepared for the next pandemic. For example, carpets and pods of people, are not ideal during a pandemic. Denmark has a more “home care” concept.

**BBQ AND PHOTO CONTEST UPDATE**

Denise Exler, OLRA Board Director, advised that the 2021 contest opens on May 25<sup>th</sup> and closes on October 12<sup>th</sup>. Prizes will be awarded in the adult and youth (16 and under) categories of people, scenery, and wildlife: 1<sup>st</sup> prize \$25, 2<sup>nd</sup> prize \$20 and 3<sup>rd</sup> prize \$15. Overall winner prize is \$25. Send email photos (6 MB or smaller) taken on or around Otter or Little Otter Lakes to Denise at [otterlakepix@gmail.com](mailto:otterlakepix@gmail.com), and indicate category, phone number, mailing address, email address and OLRA membership name. One photo per adult category and up to 3 photos per youth category. Voting will be by email after October 12<sup>th</sup>. Details will be sent by email to all OLRA members. The annual BBQ has been cancelled due to COVID-19.

**CANADA DAY BOAT PARADE**

Denise Exler, OLRA Board Director, introduced OLRA’s first Canada Day Boat Parade to take place on July 1, 2021 (rain date July 3), from 2 to 4 pm. Prizes worth over \$50 will be awarded for the Most Patriotic, Most Creative, and Most Otter Lake Spirit. The best overall winner will be awarded with a Trophy and a \$100 Marina Gift Certificate. Prizes are awarded to OLRA members only. This event is free to all Otter Lake and Little Otter Lake cottagers and property owners. Details will be sent by email to all OLRA members.

***NB: Boat Captains are responsible for adherence to safe boat operation regulations and Ontario and Health Unit mandated COVID prevention protocols.***

## **MEET YOUR LOCAL SPECIES AT RISK. GUEST SPEAKER:**

Tianna Burke, Conservation Biologist, Georgian Bay Biosphere, provided a packed, entertaining, and engaging presentation on species at risk in our backyard:

- The Georgian Bay Biosphere covers 200 km along Georgian Bay from the French River to Port Severn, with unique habitat including 30,000 islands. It's the world's largest freshwater archipelago.
- There are 53 species at risk in the Biosphere most of which exist in habitat in the Otter Lake area
- Snapping turtles have suffered habitat loss, predation, etc. A female Snapping Turtle only starts to lay eggs when it is 20 years old and starts with only about 15 eggs. It takes 1,400 eggs for a snapper to replace itself!
- Bird Species at Risk Facts:
  - Bald Eagles. We only have about 1400 pairs left.
  - Canada Warblers live in a mixed forest with shrub understory.
  - Eastern Wood-Pewee.
  - Wood Thrushes prefer large mature mixed forests.
  - Night Hawks drop eggs anywhere and then sit on them. Scoop bugs.
  - Barn Swallows.
  - Window collisions kill many birds. Put multiple bird deco's in windows because one is not sufficient.
  - Cats kill 100-350 million birds per year in Canada. Keep cats indoors and control cats that go outdoors.
- Bats at Risk Facts:
  - There are 4 species in our area.
  - They like old trees. If you need to cut a tree down, do so between October and May, when not used by bats.
  - Canadian Tire sells bat boxes, or you can google bat box plans online.
- Reptile and Amphibian Species at Risk Facts:
  - Herpetology is the study of Amphibians and Reptiles, which are two classes of animals grouped together because they are "ectothermic", meaning they derive heat from outside sources, mostly the sun.
  - Snapping Turtles lay eggs from May to mid-June.
  - Blanding's Turtle is a "threatened" species. Males and females can move over land, 1 to 7 km. They need wetlands and forests. They can nest on gravel roads.
  - Spotted Turtles are often poached.
  - Skinks are found under rocks.
  - Tree Frogs.
  - Mississauga Rattle Snake is probably at risk. Only 2 people in Ontario have died from this snake's bite and both deaths happened before 1960. One was because the person refused to go to the hospital. This is very low mortality rate when compared to deaths per year from car accidents (475).

- Don't transport injured turtles in water. Call 80-777-Tips, MNRF.
- It's illegal to harvest eggs. Call the Turtle Trauma Centre.

### **WHERE DOES A LAKE BEGIN AND PRIVATE PROPERTY END?**

Kerry Mueller, OLRA Board President, provided information researched to date, including:

- As voted on in 2017, OLRA's Aims and Objectives include taking appropriate actions to maintain the ecological integrity of the Otter Lake watershed, informing and educating about the ecology of the area and ways to protect and sustain it, and voicing the concerns of the Otter Lake residents on issues affecting them and the lake environment
- "Where does a lake begin and private property end" is a question which was sparked by the August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020 controversial Seguin Council decision to allow a private causeway in the shore area of Otter Lake. This causeway was built over the winter of 2020/2021. The following drone photo of this Seguin Council approved causeway was taken on May 7, 2021.



- Given this shoreline development approval and the risk of precedents, the OLRA Board decided to research the decision-making process for shore development, which levels of government have jurisdiction over what and

when, and what lakeshore property owners ought to by law know and do when applying for permits to develop Otter Lake shorelines.

- It is important not to restrict access to the lake and its wetlands because a lake is like a community water park, enjoyed by many for swimming, motor boating, kayaking, fishing, transportation, wildlife watching and more.
- A lake is a drinking water source for us, wildlife, and plants.
- A lake and its wetlands are an integrated ecosystem, with sensitive, vital, and sometimes rare habitat for many species, some at risk.
- The answer to this vital question can change which regulatory body has jurisdiction.
- The Otter Lake causeway in the above picture was approved by Seguin Council in an environmental protected (EP) zone, which goes against the Seguin Official Plan, a plan that claims to put the environment first. This decision required a special amendment to Seguin Township's Fill Bylaw. The resulting causeway restricts the public from using a part of Otter Lake, which had been previously enjoyed by kayakers and canoeists.
- The OLRA does not want this "one off" Seguin Council decision to be used in the future, as a precedent to approve development in other shallow lakeshore areas and wetlands. The OLRA's goal is to mitigate the risk of more long-term impacts on rare habitat, ecosystems and the "view from the canoe".
- Actions taken by the OLRA Board to gather facts to better understand this Seguin Council decision included:
  - Freedom of Information (FOI) requests made of Seguin and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF). The latter is in the process of completing one.
  - Inquiries were made of the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP), Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), and Navigation Protection Program (NPP).
  - Legally obtaining drone photographs of the causeway, such as the one shown at the AGM.
- What OLRA has learned to date includes:
  - Water in Ontario is considered a right in common and cannot be privately owned.
  - As per the *Beds of Navigable Waters Act*, the beds of most navigable waters in Ontario are Crown Land and as such, regulated by the MNRF.
  - Shore Road Allowances (SRA) were usually originally reserved as Crown Land largely for forestry. Over decades, the sale of some SRAs could be facilitated by municipalities.
  - In 2009, the MNRF authorized municipalities to sell parts of SRAs under water, if deemed appropriate.
  - It may be unclear if the part(s) of a SRA under water were included in a SRA purchase.
  - It seems MNRF won't review/approve projects on SRA under water and deemed privately owned.
  - A municipality's Planning Department and Council can then give some project approvals (but not all).

- An environmentally strong Official Plan and a Council adhering to it are key to local environmental protection.
- Obtaining project approvals can be confusing for property owners as there is no “one stop shopping” and/or clear steps to follow.
- Some regulatory bodies from which one may need project approval (there may be others) include:
  - Municipality.
  - MNRF regarding for example projects on Crown Land and/or in water.
  - DFO regarding for example projects affecting fish habitat.
  - MECP regarding for example species at risk, pollution, etc.
  - North Bay Mattawa Conservation Authority regarding for example septic systems.
  - Transport Canada regarding for example obstructing a water body.
- The OLRA is not finished with its research. More to come on this important subject.

### **INVASIVE SPECIES UPDATE: JAPANESE KNOTWEED AND PHRAGMITES**

Kerry Mueller, OLRA Board President, provided information on invasive plant species, including:

- Cut down Phragmites before it seeds, in July or early August, to eventually exhaust the plants. This can take years.
- It's hard to kill or control Japanese Knotweed. Seguin tested different methods of control on the patches on Otter Lake in 2020. Peter Koppisch, Director of Public Works, said treatment with Glyphosate will be done in 2021.

### **OTTER LAKE TEAM UPDATE: PARRY SOUND RUN FOR HOSPITAL EQUIPMENT**

Kim Karges, Chair of the West Parry Sound Health Centre Foundation (WPSHCF), provided the following comments:

- The Otter Lake Team was the second to form a team. They were 5<sup>th</sup> overall in team pledges.
- This year we are launching the **Helen Bryce Community Builder Award**, in honour of Helen, who took our annual Georgian Bay Walk, Run, Pole to a whole new level. A long time Pointe au Baril cottager, Helen and her team have raised over \$100,000 over the years.
- You can donate directly on the site.
- Kim expressed thanks for the generous support of the Otter Lake Team and the event overall.

### **BOATING INITIATIVES – SQL 2021 SURVEY, NO WAKE SIGNS, NOISE**

Kerry Mueller, OLRA Board President, provided a summary on Boating Initiatives:

- Safe Quiet Lakes (SQL) is launching their 2021 survey “Your Lakes, Your Views”. The link will be emailed soon. Please participate to be heard.
- In consultation with Transport Canada, SQL hopes to encourage boaters to make responsible wake choices. “No Wake” signs will be available in June for \$20.00 + shipping. Please contact [Crystal@safequiet.ca](mailto:Crystal@safequiet.ca) to order. The SQL pilot project in a narrow channel where the 10 km/hr. speed limit applies made a difference.
- The Decibel Coalition is an initiative to lobby Transport Canada for decibel limits on boats in line with those in 30 US states and the EU.
- A decibel (dB) limit is enforceable as it can be easily measured.
- 30 US states have limits; major US boat manufacturers already comply.
- Recommendations would be 75 dB at the shore (a “drive by” level that disturbs conversation) and 88 dB at “stand still” idle at boat.
- 7 Municipalities, FOCA and 30 lake associations in Canada already support SQL.
- An OLRA member present asked if this applies to loud music on boats. A dB limit would not apply to music, just boat motor noise. However, manmade noises, such as music, are subject to Seguin Bylaws. Please refer to them.
- An OLRA member present asked if the Decibel Coalition is liaising with the OPP. Yes. The Decibel Coalition has an OPP representative who is supportive.

**Motion: OLRA will formally support the Decibel Coalition’s efforts to lobby Transport Canada to impose decibel limits on boats similar to those currently in the US and the EU.**

- Approved by Electronic Vote by 93 % of Members Present (7% No).

### **FLOAT PLANE(S) FLYING LOW OVER OTTER LAKE**

Kerry Mueller, OLRA Board President, advised that:

- In 2020, one (or more) float plane(s) flew abnormally low over Otter Lake several times including near the high-voltage lines crossing the Long Arm.
- Salmon Lake residents have voiced similar complaints.
- Transport Canada says to report abnormal flying practices to the OPP.
- Record the plane’s registration number, and other features, if possible, for reporting to OPP.

### **ELECTING OLRA BOARD MEMBERS**

**Thank you to Gerry McDole, OLRA Board Director, who has decided to step down.** Kerry Mueller and the Board thank Gerry McDole after serving 3 years on the OLRA Board. He will be missed for his work on special projects such as the Seguin Official Plan review and the Lake Plan. Thank you, Gerry, for weighing in so reliably with your wit and life experience.

Gerry’s departure now leaves a vacancy on the Board to be filled.

A motion was made that Nicole Mailloux, who currently holds the Officer position of OLRA Board Secretary, be nominated as a Director. Nicole has a science and management background. She has years of experience working with Boards as a Corporate Officer and Executive, and years of experience volunteering as a Board Director for several not for profit organizations in Guelph.

Martin Chepesiuk's term as Vice-President will expire at the end of this Annual General Meeting and David Amy's term will also expire. Both are willing to stand for re-election.

Kerry Mueller asked members if there were any further nominations. There were no further nominations.

It was moved and passed by electronic vote by 100% of the members present that:

- Nicole Mailloux be elected to the OLRA Board of Directors.
- Martin Chepesiuk's continue for another term.
- David Amy continue for another term.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the Chair of the meeting called the meeting Closed at 12:10 pm.

## **FOLLOW UP ACTIONS:**

- A member, Joanne, asked how many cottages were on Otter Lake and Little Otter Lakes.

## **Acronyms**

- AGM: Annual General Meeting
- ATV: All-Terrain Vehicle
- dB: decibel
- DFO: Department of Fisheries and Oceans
- EP: Environmental Protection
- FOCA: Federation of Ontario Cottagers Association
- FOI: Freedom of Information
- GBB: Georgian Bay Biosphere
- LPP: Lake Protection Program
- MNRF: Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry
- MECP: Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks
- OLRA: Otter Lake Ratepayers' Association
- OP: Seguin Township Official Plan

- OPP: Ontario Provincial Police
- SAR: Species at Risk
- SQL: Safe Quiet Lakes
- SRA: Shoreline Allowance
- STCR: Short Term Cottage Rentals

DRAFT