

## Land Stewardship Committee Virtual Informational Meeting

### Minutes

Tuesday, February 9, 2021

The Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) hosted a meeting open to the entire Go Home Bay community to review the “Protecting Our Lands” document that has been available on the club website, answer community member questions & provide next steps for LSC.

The members of the LSC are: George Lougheed, Doug Grundy, Patsy Cross, Barbara Zimmerman. James Rusak & Tony Pigott.

Lewis Reis was the meeting host & moderator. The meeting was started at 7:03p.m. with over 60 people online. At some points there were over 64 “connections” (some of which included multiple attendees). Lewis thanked the LSC for the time and effort they have put into working on behalf of the club over the past five years; to determine how to best protect our open lands.

Tony Pigott provided a recap of the “**Protecting Our Open Lands**” document found on the [Madawaska Club website](#). Due to Covid-19 the LSC timeline was tabled in the summer of 2020 - the purpose of this meeting was to bring the discussion back to the community to answer any questions members might have.

Tony presented:

**The Context:** Members of The Madawaska Club enjoy and are responsible for ~1600 acres of Open Lands. As the Ontario population continues to grow, so does the demand for vacation property potentially putting pressure on open space to develop. Consequently, there could be pressure on the Club due to changes in zoning and the potential for resultant increases in taxes.

**The Objective:** The LSC was asked by the Club’s Board to evaluate, and make a recommendation to the board to enhance the protected status of the clubs Open Lands, while maintaining ownership and control.

**Timeline:** As stated

**Considerations:**

- Community Values: nature & physical beauty of the area privacy, solitude and quiet of the area and the sense of community.
- External Considerations: MFTIP, which reduce property taxes on open lands by 75%. Township & Zoning By-law changes that could impact the Club's ability to maintain Open Lands.
- The possibility of Provincial Government changes (i.e. Consolidation of municipalities that would see the Township of Georgian Bay merged into a larger municipality potentially reducing our political voice.)

**Decision Framework:**

- Aligning Current & Historical Purpose
- Securing Financial Position
- Limiting Land Use
- Enhancing Development & Environmental Protection
- Maintaining Land Ownership

**Options Considered:** Five options were considered by the LSC:

- Status Quo
- Setup our own Trust or Foundation
- Amend our By-Laws
- Donate our Open Land to a Land Trust
- Conservation Agreement

**Summary Ranking** (of the options):

Tony reviewed the summary rankings of each of the option, outlining that the LSC recommended the Conservation Agreement. The committee felt this option best fit criteria for the community. This option provides the Club with protection of the Open Lands. A Conservation Agreement would establish activities which are permitted on the Open Land while also prohibiting & restricting certain other activities. There is also potential for financial incentives associated with a Conservation Agreement. There is a possibility we could qualify for Canada Nature Fund (CNF) funding.

Tony stated this is not the first nor the last discussion that the LSC would be having with the membership. The Conservation Agreement was the basis of the discussion.

**Next Steps:**

- LSC will continue to answer community questions and concerns.
- The LSC will provide feedback to the board.
- Board will provide community with details on next steps.

Tony turned the meeting over to Doug Grundy for Q & A.

The LSC had received questions from: Tammy Norris, Jim Satterthwaite, Dundee Staunton, and Duncan McCrae.

**Please find attached in the appendix all the Q & A.**

Doug read through all these Q & A. The LSC is going to format them in a frequently asked questions format and post them on the website. This might take a couple of weeks.

Lewis monitored the questions on chat there, was one received from Hugh Wilkins. Q: Would the Conservation Land qualify 100% exemption of the land tax incentive program. A. the LSC is unsure of the answer, they will investigate and get an answer to the community.

Patsy Cross spoke to when the official plan was done, there were no watershed community plans in the old official plan other than ours. The community worked very hard to develop the official community plan, they defended it vigorously with the municipality. The municipality was open to the process and the public input. It took a lot of time on the part of the community, and eventually they were represented.

Lewis opened the floor up to the community for discussion:

1. Tammy Norris wanted to thank the LSC committee, Jim Rusak, Doug Grundy for their time and effort to answer all her questions. She appreciated that they were shared on the meeting tonight.
2. Janet Brooks asked if Barb Zimmerman could comment on her experience with entering into a Conservation Agreement:

Barb entered into a Conservation Easement on an 11 acre property that has been in her family for 50 years that she inherited. Barb wanted to preserve the land in its open undeveloped state for family & friends to use. As a biologist she wanted to conserve the habitat of the land as long as possible for any rare, endangered wildlife, reptiles and birds.

It was important to Barb that she maintained ownership and control of the land; for this reason she chose a Conservation Agreement. Barb is very happy with the decision, she has preserved and protected the land for today and future generations; yet still maintains ownership and control. She now does not worry that this land would be divided up into cottage lots.

Lewis thanked the LSC for everything they have done so far; “many thanks on behalf of the Board to the Committee for all the work you have done and to put this evening together.” Lewis also reinforced this will not be the first nor the last discussion we have as a community to protect the Open Lands.

The Board will update the community on LSC at the AGM meeting. Please keep the questions coming on Conservation.

Jim Rusak spoke to add to Barb’s response and reiterated that, as a scientist, the conservation value of the Open Lands is very significant, The Club lands has 6 of 8 vitally important species listed for the province of Ontario in Schedule 1 of the Canadian Species- at- Risk Act. Further, our land has 43 species recognized as endangered, threatened or of special concern. It is very important that we protect this portion of Ontario’s Amazon for the benefit of the species and for ourselves.

Jim also reported that the Club’s MFTIP application was approved and we were “good” for another ten years.

Clair Balfour asked that “the current Ontario government appears to be making life easier for developers.” Doug answered that this is a concern of the LSC & that MPAC might deem the Open Lands are worth more money, creating a financial tax burden on the club. The Conservation Agreement would stop development and potential zoning value.

George Loughheed thanked Lewis for hosting and monitoring the meeting.

Lewis adjourned the meeting at 8:40p.m.

Submitted by:

Jan Wishart

03/08/2021