



LOCAL SERVICES BOARD OF LORING, PORT LORING AND DISTRICT
PO Box 148, Port Loring, Ontario P0H 1Y0
secretary@loringsb.com

Minutes of Board Meeting July 16, 2015

The minutes can also be viewed on our website: www.loringsb.com

Attending: Tim Gehrke, Mike Buchanan, Warren Whitehead, Luke Legault, Peggy Whitehead

Meeting brought to order by Tim at 7:00 p.m.

Conflicts: None

Minutes: Motion to accept the minutes of June 18, 2015 by Warren, 2nd by Mike, all in favour, motion carried.

Financial Report: Tanya explained the new format for the financial statement. Motion to accept the financial report of June 30, 2015 by Luke, 2nd by Warren, all in favour, motion carried.

Critical Path: Election meeting has been set for August 20, 2015 and will be after the regular board meeting. Tim will chair the meeting as he is not running for next year, there will be no self nominations and the present board has to be nominated, they will not be asked if they will stand.
911 signs still on going

Bylaws, Motions and Notices of Bylaws:
None

Old Business Outstanding:

The following old business is outstanding from November 21, 2013.

1. Action Required: Dan Brooks contacted MNDM about municipal connect. Carole Mantha has no new updates from Ministry of Finance. Dan has asked everyone that Carole has suggested and has had no response. Carole will check and see if she can provide a list of LSB's and contacts for Dan to draft a letter to lobby the MOF regarding municipal connect. Dan has received information that MOF is looking into getting a solution in the next 2 to 3 months. A few LSB's have replied, but Dan has not pursued since. MPAC has contacted us regarding municipal connect and Dan has sent back a letter specifying our needs for municipal connect. An email from another LSB asking us for a follow up regarding municipal

connect and I am to let him know that we have been contacted by MOF and they are looking at getting access for the LSB. On February 27, 2015 Dan and Peggy had a conference call with MPAC and they are working on getting this for us. There has been no update so far. As of April 23, 2015 Mike and Tanya went to MPAC in Parry Sound where they got an additional tool to find some of the properties. As of May 21, 2015 according to MPAC, that the Ministry has included in their spring budget a requirement for MPAC to share information to LSB and LRB – **no update**

The following old business is outstanding from December 18, 2014

1. Action Required: The new sign for the Lions den, Warren needs a site plan for this. Peggy will give Warren the survey and he will ask if we can get the sign that Trout Creek has, if we get the KM lowered. Warren is waiting for MTO and the sign people to get back to him regarding the flashing colours. As of April 23, 2015, the Board has deferred due to insufficient budget allocation – **deferred to 2015/2016.**

The following old business is outstanding from February 5, 2015

1. Action Required: A fire closure for the office door. Larry Bain will contact Peggy to get this done. **No update.**

The following old business is outstanding from March 31, 2015

1. Action Required: Mike Legault brought up where they are making plastic rinks. Mike Legault will look into finding more information for the Board – **no update**

The following old business is outstanding from April 23, 2015

1. Action Required: A phone call from a property owner asking to be reimbursed for 2014 and 2015 taxes as there is no buildings on them. Gave to Tanya, the Board has asked Peggy to notify the owner that they will only be reimbursed for the current year only when the committee verifies the property. Peggy has done this. Christopher and Tracey will do this when schools out.

2. Action Required: A phone call from a property owner and asked if they have a 911 number and another property that they own is next door to them but it is vacant, do they still need a 911 number for that proper. Gave to Tanya, an outline of procedures will be available at the next meeting.

3. Action Required: The Board wants to move the sign up to the Lion's Community Centre. Warren will check and see if we have to get a permit. As of June 18, 2015 the Board decided to leave the sign there and is looking into getting a shelter built for the sign at the community centre and this will be done in the work bee.

4. Action Required: There will be a cleanup when we take over the building. Mike will advise when. Mike will post flyers and it will be on June 6, 2015. As of June 18, 2015 the cleanup will be after the construction is done.

The following old business is outstanding from May 21, 2015

1. Action Required: Email from the Ministry of Tourism, Culture & Sport announcing a new infrastructure program. Luke is to check if this applies to LSB. Sandra will check into this. As of July 16th, the Board will meet with Al Dare, Steve Davis, Darrell Rogerson, Reid Haigh and Debbie Russell on July 20, 2015 at 7:00 p.m. for a community planning idea.

2. Action Required: Email from a property owner regarding vacant lands. Gave to Tanya to check and Peggy will advise that reimbursement will only be for the current year. I have done this, but waiting to be verified that it is vacant.

3. Action Required: Chrissy Hampel asked what we were going to name the building. The Board said the Sandra Gendron had made up a poster for the kids for a contest to name the

building. Tanya will give this to Marla. Tanya has the names and will be presented to the Board at the next meeting.

Old following old business is outstanding from June 18, 2015

1. Action Required: Mike said we need someone to put the basketball nets up. Luke will put up nets. As of July 16th Mike said one has to be replaced.

2. Action Required: Darrell asked about bylaws if there are 2 what are our procedure to make sure what is followed. The Board will check into this.

Old Business Complete

Complete from March 31, 2015

Tim recommends that 3 community representatives work with Tanya Buchanan and Sandra Gendron to consider alternate means to future tax levy calculations and to make recommendations to the Board at its August meeting. Motion to authorize a 911 sub committee by Mike, 2nd by Luke, all in favour, motioned passed. Dave Sheepway will be the lead along with Al Dare, Tanya, Sandra, Christopher Ballard and Larry Bain. As of May 21, 2015 they have held one meeting – **deferred to end of the meeting.**

Warren mentioned that we should have a Hazard Assessment on the property when we take it over. The Board will do this when the building purchase is completed. This has been done and found some fencing that has to be taken care of.

Complete from April 23, 2015

The Board has asked Peggy to notify the owner that they will only be reimbursed for the current year only when the committee verifies the property. Darrell asked if the meeting is open to the public and what is there mandate. Tim said they had already formed a committee and they will take into account on the public concerns and will be addressed in the August meeting. The mandate will be emailed to Darrell from Tim. The Board will have the Fire Department do an audit for the vacant lots to see if there is a building on there. Kerry Booth said they will go 200 meters from the roadway and go beyond to protect property. They have an agreement with the MNR.

Complete from May 21, 2015

The Board has discussed about getting face book. Christopher will look into this. On July 16, 2015 Debbie Russell gave the report on Christopher's behalf. A community information face book page with 3 administrators with strict parameters will be looked at. They were asking what the board thought of this and they said it would be a good idea for the community. Darrell asked why the Board had refused to apply for a grant in possibly November 2014. Tim will look into this. Tim said this must have been missed.

Complete from June 18, 2015

A 2015-16 Ontario Sport & Recreation Fund a survey on feedback for your application experience. Gave to Tanya.

Bell & Hydro lines were only buried about 6 inches and for safety reasons they will have to be buried to 3 feet. This should be done around next week.

Baseball has already started and soccer starts next week. Mike was asked to purchase more soccer balls and 2 small nets. Mike will order.

Luke mentioned swings at the playground. Luke will look into this. Peggy checked the insurance and they said there is no additional premium under the liability coverage. Luke said the price for swings is \$1,800.00 to \$2,500.00. This will be on next year's budget.

Correspondence

1. A brochure for the Library on Management Skills Program.

Action Required: Gave to Luke

2. Email from the Ministry of Tourism, Culture & Sport on tips for the library to keep on track for their grants and surveys.

Action Required: None

3. Email from the PLT regarding a teleconference.

Action Required: Mike attended and said there will be another meeting in December.

4. Email from Grants Ontario saying they have issued a grant of \$14,345.00 to be deposited on July 10, 2015 for the 2015-16 Ontario Sport & Recreation Fund.

Action Required: Caroline Loiselle will meet with Tanya and Sandra to discuss how to proceed with programs.

5. Phone call from a property owner in Blair Township and said they are not happy with the vacant land fees and are thinking about getting out of our LSB area.

Action Required: None

6. A letter from Lorna Davis regarding Wilson Lake Boat Launch.

Action Required: Mike to review

7. Luke said that Gary & Linda Mackenzie said they paid for a 911 sign, but never received.

Action Required: Peggy will look into this.

Financial: None

Marketing: None

Safety: Kerry Booth said that 2 paramedics have been approved for this area with an 8 hour shift. Dave Thomas has asked Kerry if the LSB will give support of a feasibility study/business case to combine into one fire hall and ambulance together instead of 3 separate fire halls. The Board agreed.

Action Required: Kerry will let Parry Sound know of the Boards decision.

Library: None

Recreation: Debbie asked if they could have a car show at the ball diamond on August 19, 2015.

Action Required: The Board said they could.

No smoking signs are in.

Action Required: Mike will get these installed.

Chrissy Hampel said there have been some complaints about dogs at the farmer's market.

Action Required: Mike will get signs for entrance to the rink and Debbie will let the farmer's market people know.

Infrastructure: None

New Business: Tim will ask the Board to prepare an early budget for the next board.
Action Required: None

Pay Bills: 14 bills presented to be paid.

Trillium Municipal Supply - \$103.42 (signs)
George Walters \$100.00 (blog)
The City of Thunder Bay - \$86.69 (rink taxes)
The City of Thunder Bay - \$706.15 (community centre)
Jennifer Whitehead - \$53.91 (soccer)
On Conference - \$22.76 (teleconference)
Albert Lamb - \$750.04 (grass cutting)
Peggy Whitehead - \$1,000.00 (honorarium)
WSIB - \$9.10
Indigo Books \$346.15 (books)
Port Loring Home Building \$975.82 (community centre, recreation, dock)
Buchanan Hardware \$7.33 (community centre supplies)
M&T Buchanan Enterprises Inc. \$642.97 (hydro)
The following bills have already been paid.
Hydro One \$69.42(Hydro-rink)

Motioned to pay bills by Warren, 2nd by Mike, all in favour, motion passed.

Public Comment:
None

Regarding vacant properties the taxation committee of David Sheepway, Chair, Larry Bain, Al Dare, Tanya Buchanan, Reid Haigh, Christopher Ballard and Sandra Gendron, Al Dare presented the report to the community and the Board. The report will be referred to the next Board. Copy attached.

Allan Barber asked if the board can tax the same as the road tax, by assessment with a mill rate.

Dee Bakker said they have 2 properties, but have 6 roll numbers. Mike said to contact Parry Sound as they can combine it to 2 roll numbers.

Darrell asked if the board had looked at a mill rate on assessed property.

Darrell said the LSB does not have to use OPTA, we can bill our own taxes.

Darrell suggested that the LSB could do a \$5.00 permit to have control of properties.

Allan Barber said the secretary should let MPAC know when I know of new properties.

9:10 p.m. Motion to adjourn the meeting.

Next meeting will be on Thursday, August 20, 2015 at 7:00 p.m.

Prepared By
Peggy Whitehead
Peggy Whitehead
Secretary/Treasurer

Posted July 23, 2015

Background:

As a volunteer Board in an unorganized township, the Local Services Board of Loring, Port Loring and Area (LSB), presently cannot obtain accurate, timely information on property divisions and building construction for its large area of responsibility. This is a long-standing issue that has caused disparity in taxation. The LSB was aware that the various levies were not applied to vacant land properties. In effect, a portion of the property owners – those with developed properties and shown on the property listings as “developed” – carried the full tax burden for LSB services that are provided to all property owners in the area.

As the region continues to grow and develop, it is clear that this approach is unfair and, as a minimum, all property owners have the responsibility to cover the cost for fire and emergency services. It is also apparent that the LSB requires a method to keep track of property development to ensure all property owners pay for the appropriate tax levies. After numerous unsuccessful attempts to secure access to the provincial land records database - a resource that would provide the LSB with timely and accurate information on land development - the LSB decided it had to start implementing changes to ensure fairness in taxation for residents and ensure that all property owners contribute to the costs of LSB services they receive. As a first step in this process, in 2015 all property owners would contribute to the cost of providing for fire and emergency services; and only developed properties (ie, those with residences/buildings) would pay the additional tax levies for the remainder of LSB services (recreation, infrastructure, contingency, administration). Since it only had access to manual records, the LSB sought volunteers to assist in the review of MPAC records to identify those property owners that were billed “\$0” for LSB levies. This review was completed in Jan 2015, and 669 properties were added to the LSB taxation list for fire and emergency services only.

This decision was a substantial change from the status quo and some property owners objected to the tax. In response to those objections, an advisory Committee was appointed by the LSB and had the following mandate or goals:

- (1) to review the concerns raised at the LSB meeting 30 Mar 15 and any issues raised afterwards - either by direct conversations with LSB members or the community-at-large (ie, through social media);
- (2) identify the most pressing concerns to the LSB;
- (3) identify ways to mitigate those concerns, or propose alternative method(s) to ensure equitable payment of fire and emergency services.

The Committee was tasked to provide a report to the LSB by the August 2015 meeting.

Committee Discussions/Review:

The Committee discussed a variety of options and came to the following conclusions:

- 1) The mandate of LSB members is for a one-year term. Formulae for the development of tax levies can only be applied one year at a time;

- 2) The LSB budget must be developed, presented to the Community for review and approval (via the General Meeting), and be submitted to Thunder Bay before 1 December of each year. Any proposal or change must respect these deadlines;
- 3) The LSB is a *volunteer* Board with many members donating their time while balancing the demands of their primary jobs, businesses or families. The recommended process(es) to calculate tax levies and prepare the annual budget must not be an all-consuming task or an administrative burden; and
- 4) Any option put forward by the Committee had to respect the rights of all property owners, with everyone making an appropriate contribution for the LSB services that they receive.

In the course of its discussions, the Committee quickly realized that there was a significant lack of knowledge [within the community] and an even greater level of miscommunication on the subjects of tax levies, budgets, and fire/emergency services in general. Even within the Committee, some members were unaware of how the tax levies are calculated, and what levies were assessed against vacant land versus developed properties. In addition to this lack of knowledge, there are many residents who believe that the Fire Dept will not respond to all calls, or provide services to all properties. In short, these residents believe that they are being asked to pay for a service that provides no benefit to them. As rumours started, some residents tried to find clarification on these issues in the LSB minutes but found the minutes did not provide enough detail to answer their concerns.

The Committee members believe that such misunderstandings and the absence of information is a large factor in the dissatisfaction expressed by Community members. Many rumours and miscommunication would have been stopped or proven to be false simply by providing more information about the fire/emergency services tax levy to the community. For example, the minutes for the General Meeting could have included the Fire Dept's budget submission (a document that provided extensive detail on how the tax monies would be spent), provide more detail (in general) on what tax levies are charged by the LSB, and information to show how the various levies are calculated. Given the challenges of internet access in the LSB area of responsibility, this information must be made available through a wide area and in a variety of forms (e-mail, paper copies within the community, at the library, etc). On this issue, the Committee believes that the LSB must over-communicate in order to ensure as many residents as possible have detailed and accurate information. A move towards a Facebook site for the LSB should allow the Board to provide timely updates/information, which would then address the concerns of many residents and stop misinformation.

In the course of its meetings and discussions, the Committee learned what other municipalities are doing with regard to tax levies. A comparison of taxation for 2015 is as follows:

LSB Area: developed properties are taxed for administration, infrastructure, recreation, contingency and fire/emergency services. Vacant land properties pay tax levy for fire/emergency services only,

Restoule: all properties are taxed for all services (approx \$210 per year), and
Britt: \$258.00 per year to all residential properties.

The approach taken by the LSB to charge vacant property owners for fire/emergency services is not unreasonable; it is in keeping with the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines (MNDM)

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principal that property owners pay for services that are provided to them. The requirement to contribute towards fire/emergency services - a new cost for some property owners - is overdue.

Regarding the concerns that the Fire Dept would not provide services to all properties in the region, their response to calls that have occurred over the past several years demonstrates that this is simply untrue. The Fire Dept has acquired significant equipment resources to provide services to emergency incidents that occur on road-access and off-road properties. More specifically:

- (1) The Fire Dept has an Argo that allows for the transport of personnel and equipment to vacant land incidents regardless of their distance from the road;**
- (2) it has a boat, specialized extrication equipment, portable pumps, and equipment that allow the dispatch of fire services to remote areas;**
- (3) the men and women who volunteer with the Fire Dept are trained on this equipment and are able to respond to accidents that occur in farm fields, logging areas, and snowmobile or ATV trails. For many calls, Fire Dept volunteers carry this mobile equipment, on-foot if necessary, to get to the location of a fire or emergency; and**
- (4) the cost to provide fire and emergency services to this area cannot simply be covered by the revenue generated from Trash to Treasures (a commonly held belief). The costs were outlined in detail at the LSB General Meeting, during the Fire Chief's budget presentation. The lack of understanding and awareness of the Fire Dept's costs, and the services it provides can largely be attributed to the poor attendance at the Annual General Meeting. Even so, the fact remains that providing services to all properties costs money (fuel, training, equipment and infrastructure, maintenance, etc). All property owners must share this financial responsibility.**

The Committee remains available to provide further clarification to the LSB on the issue of fire/emergency services taxation. As a final point, the above is only a summary of the extensive discussions and review conducted by the Committee; its members request an opportunity to review/provide feedback on any communication bulletins/updates that the LSB may provide to the community on this issue.

Chair – David Sheepway

Members – Tanya Buchanan

Larry Bain

Christopher Ballard

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Recommendations:

Based on the above information and intense discussion/debate by the Committee members, it is recommended that:

- A. the LSB continue to apply the fire/emergency services tax levy to all properties within its area of responsibility. The rationale for this recommendation is as follows:

All residents benefit from fire/emergency services - whatever you need (fire, emergency service) you will get, regardless of where you are. As a result, all property owners have a responsibility to contribute towards the costs of those services;

The argument that accidents only occur on residential property, or that fires can be left to "run their course" on vacant land are unreasonable to consider and equally unreasonable to implement. Fire/emergency response is provided to all properties, and once on site, the Fire Dept will provide the response that is appropriate to the situation (ie, if there is a fire, the fire crew will respond and it will not be left to simply "burn itself out");

Any form of roll back will send out the wrong message to the community. The Committee discussed various types of rebates or reductions, but it quickly became clear that this would be extremely time-consuming and cumbersome for the LSB to manage/implement. It also runs contrary to the MNDM mandate that taxation is based on services provided to the property owner. Lastly, it implies that multiple property owners are unique from other residents in the community;

The decision to tax all property owners for fire/emergency services is reasonable and in keeping with what other municipalities have done for many years. What seems to make this a hot issue for some residents is the cost that owners of multiple vacant properties must now pay for each separate property. While the Committee fully appreciates that this new cost can be significant in some cases, that does not support the request that this group of property owners should be exempt from paying for fire/emergency services, or be entitled to a tax rebate; and

A good portion of the dissatisfaction on this issue can be attributed to "price increase overload". Residents are dealing with increasing hydro rates, home heating costs, gas

prices, and rising grocery costs. The tax levy for fire/emergency service was yet another increase - the proverbial "straw on the camel's back".

- B. The LSB must review its communication plan to increase community awareness on its activities, emphasize the importance of the Annual General Meeting, and provide detailed information on financial matters. Of course, the residents must make the effort to become informed on the activities of the LSB and the decisions that the Board has to make. Adding more detail to the LSB minutes will help residents in their efforts to be more aware of issues within their community. However, it is worth mentioning that since the LSB allows public attendance at every monthly meeting, the best way for the community to be more informed is for residents to attend the meetings.**

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