

MINUTES

OTTER LAKE LANDOWNERS' ASSOCIATION
(OLLA)

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
JULY 28, 2007

1. WELCOME:

President Marcia Maxwell welcomed all to the 16th annual general meeting.

2. CURRENT EXECUTIVE:

Marcia introduced the current directors:

Marcia Maxwell	President
Carol Schaefer	Secretary
Cam McKay	Treasurer
Frank Soural	Past-President
Karl Fiander	Lake Steward
Mike Carson	Editor of the OLLA newsletter
Douglas Franks	Web Master
Phil Mayhew	Director
Lisa Baker	Director
Dorothy Goubault	Director

3. PRESIDENT'S OPENING REMARKS:

As we did last year we will aim to adjourn the meeting at noon as I am sure you all have many other activities you would prefer to be doing,.

This has been a very busy year, many of us on the board have full time jobs and travel a distance (from Ottawa, Peterborough, Brockville and Oakville) for the monthly meetings that we hold throughout the year and I would like to thank the Directors for all their efforts and time spent in this commitment.

While sitting on the end of the dock the other night - it was so peaceful with the calm water, moon overhead and the haunting call of the loon from across the lake, I reflected on the issues facing us with the Sustainable Lake Plan. The main goal is to maintain the quality and enjoyment of Otter Lake for everyone in the future as in past years.

Now that we have gathered the statistics from an overwhelming number of responses to the survey that we sent out – we will be starting this year in earnest to move forward with the issues identified in the plan. We will finally be calling on the volunteers who have put their names forward to help on the various committees that will be struck. Water Quality, Septic Systems, Shorelines, Community Events are some of the areas that we will be working on. Water levels, as in the past, will continue to be a topic of concern.

4. APPROVAL OF AGM MINUTES FOR 2006:

Carol read the highlights of last year's meeting. The full minutes are available on the web site.

MOVED by Graham Ide, **SECONDED** by Elaine MacKay that the AGM minutes for 2006 be approved. **CARRIED**

5. TREASURER'S REPORT:

Copies of the 2007 Financial Statement of Operation for OLLA from July 24, 2006 to July 27, 2007 were distributed for review.

MOVED by Jerry Kerr, **SECONDED** by Mike Connelly that the report be accepted as printed. **CARRIED**

6 & 7. SUCCESSION PLANNING – CALL FOR DIRECTORS:

Marcia noted that a director's term is 3 years and directors are eligible to run for another term. This year, there are 4 directors whose term is up. They are Karl Fiander, Mike Carson, Marcia Maxwell and Carol Schaefer.

Marcia asked if anyone present was interested in becoming a director, but no one put their name forward.

A show of hands was taken for each director whose term has completed, and all were approved.

8. LAKE STEWARD'S REPORT:

Karl presented his informative report using overheads. Some comments during the presentation follow:

- Karl noted the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority (RVCA) will carry out a fish assessment of Otter Creek next spring.

- Karl talked about ‘Bugs in the Mud’, a program connected to the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority (RVCA) and the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR). An assessment of mud from the lake tells us how healthy the lake is. We are currently waiting for the results of this venture.
- A question was asked about the time frame for the lake plan. This will depend on how detailed we wish to be. Since we don’t have anyone devoting their full time to the project, volunteers only, it could be 2 to 3 years before completion.

9. LAKE MANAGEMENT PLAN – SURVEY RESULTS:

Doug Franks spent many hours monitoring this activity, and highlighted some data:

- 317 surveys were sent, one for each property, and between 160 and 170 were returned. This is considered to be a very good response.
- 100% of the returns were interested in water quality.
- 89% very interested in septics which could be a political issue
- 90% of respondents enjoy seeing wild life around their properties and are not concerned for their own safety.
- 50% feel the beavers should be trapped. 25% feel they should not be trapped.
- 90% value their peace and quiet.
- 80% feel there is a problem due to personal watercraft and dogs barking.
- 80% are concerned about boating safety.
- Only 50% are concerned about security.
- Regarding water levels, 64% are content with the water levels. 14% feel the level is too high and 16% feel it is too low.
- 39% believe there is too much water level fluctuation. 29% had no opinion and 32% are satisfied as is.
- Should water levels be artificially controlled? 50% said no and 30% said yes.
- 80% are concerned with back lot development.
- Concern was expressed about road names around the lake – duplication. It is very confusing for anyone seeking directions – especially in an emergency.

Marcia thanked Doug for his efforts on the survey.

Both Wendy Mayhew and Graham Ide praised the current web site and thanked Doug for his work in this area.

10. LAKE PLAN – THE NEXT STEPS:

We will be developing committees for the otter lake plan to address the initial areas of concern as identified by the association previously outlined by myself and Doug.

For example: water quality – continued testing & monitoring

Septic systems; healthy shorelines - ribbon of life; water levels and community events to name a few.

This may involve reporting when the lake completely freezes over to when the last of the ice is gone. It could be counting loons on the lake and/or the number of babies. Or perhaps counting the numbers or sightings of other wildlife.

We will be providing ongoing education as we go through the process with meetings and seminars similar to the septic system meeting earlier this year.

Finally we will be working with the various levels of government as necessary as well as being involved in the development of the middle rideau watershed plan

Marcia noted everyone's input on all issues are still welcome. OLLA intends to provide educational seminars as needed. There was a good turn out from Otter Lake and Bass Lake residents for the recent seminar on septics. For those who missed it, three more seminars are planned at various locations. Doug has added these dates to our web site for those interested.

In the future, Marcia expects to call a meeting of all those who have volunteered (volunteers names are still welcome) to determine how individuals would like to be involved. It was suggested by an audience member that at least one representative from each road association be involved.

11. WATER LEVELS:

Is there an ideal level? Phil has been measuring the water level at the culvert once a week for the past several years. He provides this information to Doug Franks for our web site and to Graham Ide as well. Graham adds this information to his web site.

This week, the measurement from the top of the culvert to the water is 28 ½". In Phil's observations over the years, he feels a measurement of 34" could be acceptable to all on the lake. At this measurement, everyone should be able to use their docks and their boats and no flooding of properties or roads should be experienced.

If the beaver dams were completely removed, the water level would drop 25", much too low.

Once the water level reaches 34", Phil and Dorothy Goubault intend to circle the lake placing very visible markers on rocks or any other permanent landmarks. Once this is completed, residents will be notified and asked to observe the lake level on their properties, and then they will be asked to decide if this level is acceptable.

An audience member has advised RVCA that 30" would be more acceptable to him.

Several members of the audience reported the problems they are experiencing due to high water levels:

- severe erosion of shoreline
- loss of trees along the shoreline
- flooding of properties
- flooding of septic beds
- flooding of private roads

One speaker reports losing at least 2 metres of shoreline at the north end of the lake.

It was pointed out erosion can be prevented by installing rocks along the shoreline, but permission to do so must be obtained from various agencies.

The beavers, whose dams are part of the high water problem, began moving into the area in 1954.

As Karl noted, conditions with water levels is a new reality. Conditions have changed in the last 40 years. We need to adapt to current conditions.

12. WATER LEVELS – OPTIONS TO EXPLORE:

In anticipation of members wishing to try to deal with the water level problem, a group of OLLA directors met with engineers from the RVCA to discuss the possibility of installing a weir – the pros and cons. A weir is a small dam which could help, to a certain degree, to maintain a comfortable lake level.

Karl had some slides of an existing weir, but it was quite a massive one – much larger than our lake would require. There are several possible designs.

One of the undesirable aspects of a weir is the prevention of fish spawning from the creek. However, some weir designs will provide for fish spawning.

If this avenue was to be pursued, it could take several years to obtain an appropriate design, the authorizations needed from several agencies to build the weir and then to actually build it.

A question was posed from the floor about the expense involved. Karl responded we don't really know, but it could be in the neighbourhood of \$100,000. It's possible some funding could be available.

Who would manage such a weir on Otter Lake? Probably RVCA would manage and maintain it.

Does the membership wish OLLA to continue investigating a weir and/or other options that may be available?

Some audience members expressed serious concerns about the effects of a weir on the lake. We must consider those people living along Otter Creek who depend on water flow from the lake. Phil noted there is a design that always allows some water flow.

How would local wetlands be affected? Some wetlands were completely destroyed in 2005 when we had such a drought. They have never recovered.

An audience member noted that Otter Lake is a head water lake rather than a flow through lake. This causes great fluctuations in water levels and is nature's way.

One audience member stated, in the past 50 years on the lake, he has never seen the lake this high at this time of year.

Phil noted RVCA, in an attempt to control the problem caused by the beaver dams, removed only the tops of their dams. This was done to prevent a too rapid and drastic drop in the water level which would adversely affect other wild life. RVCA could continue to control the dams in this way; however, they cannot control individuals who are illegally entering the creek and completely removing the dams.

Another audience member expressed concern about properties being designated as wetlands, when they are really just flooded due to high water levels.

Mike Carson noted OLLA is only seeking authorization from the membership to explore possible water level controlling devices. Our findings would be shared with the membership to make a decision.

Moved by Mike Carson that instead of going ahead with investigation of a weir, we first find out if property owners would accept a level of 34" at the culvert. **Seconded by** Mike Connelly **Carried.**

It was noted, this lake level might not even be reached this year.

OLLA would like to create an email list of all property owners. **Names would not be traded with any other organization.** This would allow OLLA to save postage and would allow OLLA to communicate important information between newsletters. **If you wish to be on such a list, please provide your email address to Doug Franks at djfranks@uottawa.ca**

An amendment was proposed to the above motion:

Moved by Ken Maxwell that the OLLA board investigate alternative methods of controlling water levels. **Seconded by** Ed Wilton. **Carried.**

13. ADJOURNMENT:

There being no new business, the meeting adjourned at 12:10 p.m.