



**COUNCIL  
AGENDA REPORT**

**TO:** Mayor Harding and Members of Council  
**MEETING DATE:** March 10, 2021  
**SUBJECT:** Recreation, Parks, Trails & Facilities Master Plan/Strategy

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**THAT a Steering Committee, comprised of seven members, one from each Council Ward and four from the public be established to lead the development of the Recreation, Parks, Trails & Facilities Master Plan/Strategy, in accordance with the Township’s Procedural By-law;**

**AND THAT Council waive the citizen member age requirement as provided for in section 1.1.10 of Township Procedure By-law 2019-079 to accommodate youth participation on the Steering Committee;**

**AND FURTHER THAT the Terms of Reference, attached as Appendix I to the report entitled “Recreation, Parks, Trails & Facilities Master Plan/Strategy’ and dated March 10, 2021 be approved;**

**AND FINALLY THAT staff be authorized to issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) for consulting services to create a Recreation, Parks, Trails & Facilities Master Plan/Strategy.**

**APPROVALS:**

	Date	Signature
Submitted: Ken Becking P. Eng., Director of Public Works	Mar.5/21	Original signed by K. Becking
Approved: Derrick Hammond, CAO	Mar.5/21	Original signed by D. Hammond

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

The report sets out a recommended approach for the completion of the Recreation, Parks, Trails & Facilities Master Plan/Strategy as directed by Council.

## **ORIGIN:**

The Township's parks and recreation infrastructure are an integral part of the identity of the Muskoka Lakes community. Council wishes to engage with the community to develop a plan, or strategy, which ensures financially sustainable service levels are provided to the community.

## **BACKGROUND:**

### Recreation Programming Today

#### *Infrastructure Focused*

With the exception of the annual swimming program, the Township does not currently offer residents any direct recreation programs. The Township's approach to satisfying the community's needs for recreational activities has been and is focused on establishing and maintaining community infrastructure needed to support these demands from the community.

The extent of this infrastructure is identified in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Township Recreation Infrastructure**

<b>Infrastructure/Asset</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Units</b>	<b>Replacement Value (\$x1000)</b>	<b>Condition</b>	<b>Data Confidence</b>
<b>Arenas</b>	2	Ea.	17,800	Fair	High
<b>Community Centres</b>	14	Ea.	35,500	Good	High
<b>Boat Launches</b>	21	Ea.	525	Fair	Low
<b>Beaches</b>	11	Ea.	110	Good	Low
<b>Docks and Wharves</b>	33	Ea.	5,816	Fair	Moderate
<b>Golf Course</b>	1	Ea.	200	Good	Moderate
<b>Parks</b>	20	Ea.	5,170	Fair	Low
<b>Play Grounds</b>	6	Ea.	900	Fair	Low
<b>Trails</b>	37.2	Km.	1,950	Fair	Moderate
<b>Total</b>			\$67,971	Good	Moderate

The infrastructure noted in Table 1 support the following activities:

- Arenas - Winter Ice Sporting Activities (hockey and figure skating);
- Community Centres - Passive Indoor Social and Recreational Activities (social clubs, exercise programs, yoga, tai chi, etc.);

- Beaches, Docks and Wharves - Water Sports and Activities (access to water, swimming); and
- Golf course, Parks, Playgrounds and Trails– Active and Passive Outdoor Sporting Activities (baseball, soccer, tennis, gatherings, hiking, nature appreciation, etc.).

Access to passive outdoor recreation oriented facilities (parks, trails, docks, etc.) is free. As activities or programming that occurs in or at Township facilities is organized by community minded individuals or volunteer led organizations, user fees are reduced.

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, Council authorized on a pilot project basis, certain enhancements to the levels of service provided in certain parks (cross country ski trail at the Milford manor Golf Course) and trails (Huckleberry Rock) to enable recreation access and use during the winters months. These enhancements have been favourably received by the public.

### State of Recreation Infrastructure

The estimated replacement value of the recreation infrastructure exceeds \$67.9 M or approximately \$1940 for each of the Township's 35,000 residents. Most of this infrastructure was constructed during the 1960's, right through to the 1990's and is currently rated to be in good overall condition. This said, the majority of this infrastructure is at or near the end of its life, at the lower end of the condition state range, or has already dropped into fair condition state which is indicative of the need for significant reinvestments. The overall condition rating is being artificially elevated by the condition of the community centre class of assets.

As Council may recall, the 2021 Ten Year Capital Forecast predicts rehabilitation/repair/replacement needs for this infrastructure of approximately \$11,897,000. As previously reported, the data collection for these classes of asset is not yet complete and therefore the conclusions are somewhat speculative, none the less, Staff believe that the actual needs of the infrastructure are higher and the related monetary amounts may be understated. To better determine the state of this infrastructure, our asset management review continues, the results of which are expected later this year.

### Demographics and Usage

Based on the 2016 Census, the median age of a permanent resident is 54.7 years, versus the provincial median of 41.3 years. With an aging demographic, public interest in some of the activities supported by some of the infrastructure has reduced and therefore related usage has fallen off. Despite this, the Township continues to maintain its recreation infrastructure in order to protect the municipality from liability claims resulting from our failure to maintain an acceptable standard of care, as well as to satisfy the demand from smaller user groups. With declining user fee revenue, there is a corresponding increase in pressure on the tax levy to fund the necessary rehabilitation/repair/replacement needs for this infrastructure.

In addition, a number of individuals and groups have and continue to request that the Township consider the creation of additional trails, accesses to water, as well as facilities (pickle ball courts) to name just a few.

### Looking Forward

In view of the above noted considerations, Council has expressed interest in taking a thoughtful approach to address this matter and has accordingly set the following goal in the recently approved Community Strategic Plan:

“To Enhance and Sustain Public Services and Infrastructure” was included in its new Strategic Plan.”

To accomplish this goal, the following objective was also included in the document:

“Development and implementation of an actionable recreation and trails master plan that improves community and visitor usage of the Township’s infrastructure and natural features.”

The Implementation Plan of the Strategic Plan identifies that the creation of a Recreation, Parks, Trails & Facilities Master Plan (including public access to waterfront) should be undertaken in 2021. The project will involve a review of these services and based on community engagement, develop a forward looking plan/strategy of how best to provide these services to the residents of the Township in the future. Through the approval of the 2021 Operating and Capital Budget, Council allocated funds for the completion of the project.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Purpose**

A Recreation, Parks, Trails & Facilities Master Plan/Strategy (the Plan) is intended to guide policy/infrastructure/programs/services development, as well as related service delivery in a cost effective, proactive manner, consistent with industry standards and best practices, for a specified period of time, typically five to ten years. When complete, it will constitute a clear action plan to guide and direct the Township in the development and sustainability of future recreation facilities and opportunities. The Plan must also reflect the fact that the Township also provides leisure and recreation opportunities for many non-residents from within and outside of Muskoka.

### **Process**

A successful process to develop a master plan/strategy must include the following key components:

- a strong leadership (governance and management) model; and
- a clearly defined Terms of Reference which encompasses:
  - an open and transparent consultant selection process;
  - a visioning exercise to identify long term goals;
  - a thorough review of relevant background information;
  - an assessment of needs throughout the system;
  - an assessment of the alternatives;
  - a fulsome Community and Stakeholder consultation process;
  - the development of an administrative framework; and
  - the Development of an implementation strategy.

### **Leadership Model - Steering Committee**

It is proposed that plan/strategy development process be led by a Steering Committee, comprised of seven members; one from each Council Ward and four from the public. In accordance with the Township’s Procedural By-law 2019-079, as amended, the Chair and Committee members should be

appointed by resolution of Council for the term of the project based on recommendations provided by Mayor Harding. Of the three Council members, one should be appointed as Chair of the committee.

With respect to public membership of the Committee, consideration should be given to appointment of selected applicants from the following primary user:

- Arenas;
- Community Centres;
- Parks and Trails; and
- Youth

As it relates to the appointment of a Youth representative, consideration should be given to waiving of the requirement that the individual be over the age of 18. It is important that views of youth be incorporated into the study and the stipulation within the bylaw may unnecessarily limit the opportunity for this input.

Notices will be placed on the Township website, social media, and in the local paper inviting applications from individuals to participate as members of the Steering Committee. Recommended committee members will be those who best demonstrate a reasonable understanding of the recreational needs in their respective areas of interest

It is envisioned that the Steering Committee would report through and provide updates to the General and Finance Committee. To ensure the timely completion of the project, once it appoints the Steering Committee and selects a consultant to complete the project, Council should delegate all decision making authority on the Plan/Strategy, save and except for its approval, to the General/Finance Committee.

### Terms of Reference

Another important component of the project is to ensure that its Terms of Reference captures all of the major activities within the scope of work to be undertaken by the consultant:

- data collection and research;
- visioning;
- fulsome community stakeholder engagement;
- issue identification and analysis;
- solution development;
- development of an administrative structure and implementation plan;
- conducting meetings and giving presentations to the Steering Committee and General/Finance Committee as the study progresses;
- development of a communications strategy and draft media releases;
- preparation and presentation of findings and draft reports;
- report refinement based on comments and suggestions; and
- presentation of the final report to Council.

A draft Terms of Reference is attached as Appendix I. The finalized Terms of Reference will be incorporated into a request for proposals (RFP) which will be issued to qualified firms. The RFP will be advertised through the Townships web site as well as through Biddingo, the township's preferred bidding service. Additionally, notice will be given to a small number of consultants known to have successfully completed studies of a similar nature for other municipalities of a comparable character to the Township. A four week bidding period is appropriate for procurements of this nature.

### Schedule

It is expected that Steering Committee appointments would occur at the April 14, 2021 Council meeting.

The RFP for the assignment would be issued by March 24, 2021, with proposals required to be received not later than April 21, 2021. The proposals will be reviewed by Staff and confirmed by the Steering Committee, with a recommendation for award provided for the May 12, 2021 Council meeting. Staff would anticipate a start up meeting with the selected consultant would occur within two weeks of the award.

Final scheduling of the project will be carried out by the consultant and subject to the approval of the Steering Committee. At this point however, the general expectation would be as follows:

- Visioning and data collection would occur in Q2//21.
- Public engagement, issue analysis and solution identification will be completed through Q3/21. This will allow the consultant to acquaint themselves with the Township during the busier times of the year and facilitate engagement with both permanent and seasonal residents as well as the visitor groups.
- Consideration of implementation issues would occur early in Q4/21.
- Preparation of the draft report would occur in Q4/21 and with presentation to General and Finance Committee late in the quarter. Presentation to Council would occur late in Q4/21 or early Q1/22.

The anticipated schedule will facilitate the recommendations from the plan to then inform the 2022 budget cycle.

### RATIONALE:

Parks and Recreation services are an integral part of the Muskoka Lakes community. A Recreation, Parks, Trails & Facilities Master Plan/Strategy is a vital tool needed to assist Council and staff in the setting of policy and as a guide to decision making. It will identify the services to be provided to the public, identify the best approach to delivery of those services, the resources required to support and meet the demand for services and costs to deliver on the mandate so that it is sustainable into the future. The recommended approach will lead to the efficient completion of the master plan for this important component of the Township's service offering

### FINANCIAL:

The financial implications of the recommendations are not known at the present time. Funds have been allocated within the Capital budget which should be adequate to complete the project.

**TOWNSHIP STAFF CONSULTED:**

The following staff had input into the preparation of the report:

Strategic Leadership Team

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Appendix I: Draft Terms of Reference

**CONTACT:**

Ken Becking P. Eng., Director of Public Work

705 765 3156 Ext 250

## DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE

### 1. INTRODUCTION AND PROJECT BACKGROUND

1.1. The Township of Muskoka Lakes is looking for an innovative and varied approach to long term master and capital planning for its, Parks Recreation and Trails operations in an effort to deliver high quality recreational opportunities for the Township. The Plan will reflect what stakeholders believe are the priorities for continued and future investment. It will provide guidance as to the number of parks, facilities, trails and recreation amenities and where they should be located, timelines for implementation and how they should be implemented and funded. The Plan will provide the necessary framework needed to manage recreation facilities, parks, and trails in a cost effective, sustainable and accessible manner consistent with leading industry practices.

1.2. The Township of Muskoka Lakes is situated within the District Municipality of Muskoka and is known as “The Hub of the Lakes” due to the three largest lakes being located within the Township. The Township of Muskoka Lakes is located approximately 2 hours north of Toronto along Highway 11, a 4-lane highway connected directly to the 400 series of highways.

The permanent population of the Township was approximately 6,600 in 2016 and is expected to exceed 7,000 within the next 20 years. The summer sees the population increase by over 26,000 people. This seasonal expansion is expected to continue to increase to over 30,000 within the same time horizon.

Anchored by the larger communities of Bala, Port Carling and Windermere, the municipality offers the sophistication of a popular tourism destination, plus the wholesomeness of country living. With miles of boating and superb quality of life, the Township of Muskoka Lakes hosts visitors from around the world. Many return year after year because no matter where they call home, the Township of Muskoka Lakes is the place they'd rather be.

### 2. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

It is expected that once complete, the Recreation, Parks and Trails Master Plan would assist the Municipality in the following ways:

- 2.1. Create a vision and guiding principles for recreation, parks and trails which enhance the overall community quality of life, promotes healthy living and creates a stronger sense of community;
- 2.2. Identify trends that will influence the delivery of accessible, relevant and sustainable services;
- 2.3. Infuse the principles of sustainability, accessibility and integration;
- 2.4. Identify initiatives being undertaken in surrounding communities which may impact the recreation facilities, parks and trails in Muskoka Lakes;
- 2.5. Identify and assess the diverse needs and desires of the residents (permanent and seasonal, users and non-users), commerce and community partners, and visitors; and
- 2.6. Create a prioritized implementation plan for capital investment over the term of the Plan.

### 3. SCOPE OF WORK AND DELIVERABLES

#### 3.1 Work Path

- 3.1.1. Visioning
- 3.1.2. Data collection and research
- 3.1.3. Consultation and community engagement
- 3.1.4. Issue identification and analysis
- 3.1.5. Solution development
- 3.1.6. Meetings and presentations
- 3.1.7. Media releases
- 3.1.8. Report preparation and presentation
- 3.1.9. Report refinement
- 3.1.10. Present report to Council

#### 3.2 Scope of Work

- 3.2.1. To provide an inventory of existing recreation facilities, parks and trails and their amenities and provide an assessment of their condition;
- 3.2.2. To provide a long term plan for implementing improvements to or replacement of existing recreation facilities, parks and trails and to develop future recreation facilities, parks and trails;
- 3.2.3. To provide a 15 year strategic action plan, inclusive of preliminary vignettes and capital costs;
- 3.2.4. To create community specific facility, parks and trails standards;
- 3.2.5. To clearly reflect what stakeholders believe are the priorities for continued and future investment;
- 3.2.6. To provide direction to Council and staff for future development, redevelopment and enhancement of recreation facilities, parks and trails;
- 3.2.7. To enhance the capacity to better provide, predict and facilitate recreational needs for the community now and into the future and;
- 3.2.8. Set priorities for capital investment over the next 15 years.

#### 3.3 Methodology in the Preparation of the Master Plan

- 3.3.1. Review current demographics and community profiles and implications of demographic change and barriers to participation;
- 3.3.2. Review provincial and national trends with respect to services and market demands for recreation facilities, recreation program delivery, sports, trails, and parks;

- 3.3.3. Develop and implement a community consultation plan which includes community members, stakeholders, Council and staff to ensure the incorporation of ideas and feedback into the Plan;
  - 3.3.4. Review past/current reports and studies related to recreation, parks, trails and community plans. A list is included in Appendix 'A' to this RFP; and
  - 3.3.5. Prepare rehabilitation and replacement schedules for existing and proposed facilities, parks and trails including amenities.
- 3.4. Recreation Facilities Analysis, Recommendations and Action Plan:
- 3.4.1. Review and evaluate the existing recreation facilities and compare with guidelines and standards for the provision of facilities to meet expectations and demographics;
  - 3.4.2. Determine current and future demands and identify challenges or limitations with existing facilities and recommend facilities for decommission, retrofit/repurpose, replacement and new construction;
  - 3.4.3. The review of facilities required or needed in the community should also include an assessment of facility development that is best served by the public and private sector and an identification of means in which the Township should support and or facilitate such endeavours. As well, it should assess the merits of potential partnership opportunities with community groups, the school boards, institutions and private businesses;
  - 3.4.4. Develop a facility priority list that includes recommendations for the location, timing, priority, and resourcing strategies for new, upgraded and or decommissioned facilities and order of magnitude budgets;
  - 3.4.5. Identify opportunities to optimize the use of facilities including sport tourism opportunities;
  - 3.4.6. Review existing facilities for AODA compliance and provide recommendations in 15 year plan and;
  - 3.4.7. Prepare a 15 year long term capital plan for the facilities.
- 3.5. Parks Analysis, Recommendations and Action Plan
- 3.5.1. Parks are inclusive of, but not limited to: parks, beaches, sport fields, cemeteries, amenities within parks (such as washrooms, playgrounds, and picnic shelters), open spaces and boat launches;
  - 3.5.2. Review and evaluate the existing inventory of parks and compare with guidelines and standards for the provision of facilities to meet expectations and demographics;
  - 3.5.3. Determine current and future demands and recommend parks for decommission, retrofit, replacement and new construction and for linking facilities/parks through trail systems;

- 3.5.4. The review of parks required or needed in the community should also include an assessment of park development that is best served by the public and private sector and an identification of means in which the Township should support and or facilitate such endeavours. As well, it should assess the merits of potential partnership opportunities with community groups, school boards, institutions and private businesses;
  - 3.5.5. Identify opportunities to optimize the use of parks and cemeteries including community events, weddings, concerts, tourism and other opportunities;
  - 3.5.6. Determine the suitable uses within parks, shore road and road allowances and cemeteries and categorize appropriately and identify potential policy implications;
  - 3.5.7. Explore the role that non-Township owned lands may play in meeting needs;
  - 3.5.8. Review Recreation fees and charges for appropriateness to community financial capacity, cost recovery and expectations;
  - 3.5.9. Review and recommend the level of maintenance and operations service and amenities standards that should be applied to various components of the park system;
  - 3.5.10. Review rural water access points and develop a water access strategy for canoe/kayak launching, boat launching, and access to beach or shore road allowances for walking, swimming and other recreational activities;
  - 3.5.11. Develop a park priority list that includes recommendations for location, timing and resourcing strategies for existing, new, upgraded and or decommissioned parks and preliminary concept plans and order of magnitude budgets, including parks that can be or cannot be upgraded to AODA standards;
  - 3.5.12. Provide park mapping information on Esri as determined in consultation with the Township; and
  - 3.5.13. Prepare a 15 year action plan for parks including vignette sketches for recommended park enhancements.
- 3.6. Trail Analysis, Recommendations and Action Plan
- 3.6.1. Make recommendations for trail categories and identify where trails can be developed, connected to other trails or parks, including regional trails and act as Active Transportation routes. Outline amenities, including signage, way finding, benches, and other infrastructure or equipment required for trail systems;
  - 3.6.2. Review and analyze trail development trends and make recommendations with respect to future trail use trends. Make recommendations regarding accessible trails and emergency access;
  - 3.6.3. Develop a trail priority list that includes recommendations for location, timing and resourcing strategies for existing, new, upgraded and or decommissioned trails and preliminary concept plans and order of magnitude budgets, including trails that can be or cannot be upgraded to AODA standards;
  - 3.6.4. Provide trail mapping information on Esri as determined in consultation with the Township;

- 3.6.5. Recommend a preferred strategy for land assembly for trail development;
- 3.6.6. Review and confirm the level of maintenance and operations service that should be applied to the trail system. Recommend a preferred strategy for maintenance;
- 3.6.7. Explore the role non-Township owned lands may play in meeting community needs; and
- 3.6.8. Prepare a 15 year action plan for trails, including vignette sketches for recommended trail enhancements.

#### **4. REPORTING**

- 4.1. The Consultant will be required to provide:
  - 4.1.1. Electronic copies of all draft and final reports in Microsoft Office and PDF files on a memory stick.
  - 4.1.2. Maps and plans in hard copy and disk for all presentations and/or open houses and which are compatible to the Municipality of the Township of Muskoka Lakes.
  - 4.1.3. Four (4) original bound copies of all final reports and maps.

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