

Teeth for HH by-laws

Regular readers will know that I have been unrelenting in castigating our council for their reluctance to manage their own by-laws. From the “complaint only” based model to a noise bylaw that the OPP will investigate but take no action on because they aren’t paid to enforce HH by-laws, to water quality by-laws the municipality admits have never been enforced for our vulnerable lake trout lakes; the list is very long indeed even without mentioning our zoning by-laws

Well “the times they are achanging” as the song goes

We have heard recently about new initiatives to ensure septic in HH are operating properly. We have the start of enforcement strategies and penalties for by-law infractions along with the set up of proper appeal procedures. Initial work has been done on issues like illegal dumping with more use of cameras to catch perpetrators, a much more comprehensive approach to property standards, and most recently action on roaming dogs. And a decision by our Council not to support a severance which does not meet property standards is a step in the right direction for our at capacity lake trout lakes.

HH is on a mission to put some teeth in its by-laws aided by great work from our by-law officer and employees who must enforce the legislation our council passes...

So if you are one of those who have been lulled into complacency from past practices in HH, its time to wake up and take the rule of law seriously.

Council passed the Administrative Monetary Penalty System recently and it has compliance teeth and financial impact for those who ignore our laws. And before you overreact, council and the by-law staff fully understand that it will take some time for this system to be fully functioning including a clear understanding by HH residents of the laws and the penalties for non-compliance.

A suggestion: if you aren’t sure about that shed you were planning to build next to the property line or whether you need a building permit for that cottage addition, call or drop a note to our by-law officer, Dawn Bowers at (613) 338-2811 Ext. 235 or better yet, email her at dbowers@hastingshighlands.ca

Even better would be to check the website: <https://hastingshighlands.ca/services/building-planning/>

What was wrong with the old system of toothless laws? Well, as usually is the case, if you see that all of your neighbours are ignoring the law with no consequences, then after a while you will too

And that doesn’t make for good community standards

And remember that this council has set an ambitious plan for its 4 year term for this community by tackling the big issues like highway 62, our community facilities, and many other issues. Council members are taking a leadership role in key ongoing issues like waste management .The time this group spends on tackling your issues has at least doubled in my view. And they work collegially.

Not convinced about this? If you are a member, check out Mayor Bodnar’s Facebook page regularly.

And on operating metrics, our long term debt has dropped to about half the high point in 2010, our tax arrears are well within acceptable range; our reserves should be holding steady for year end. In short the underlying fiscal foundation for HH is well managed.

Soon I will cover an update on our revenue and expenses forecast for yearend 2019. You may recall our budget was for a 1.8% increase in expenses, a 1.4% increase in revenues, with the major change an initial investment in community facilities.

Bill Cheshire Baptiste Lake