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President's Message

After a very mild December, it seems winter has now arrived. Let's hope this cold weather stays long enough to have a skating rink this year!

This edition of the newsletter mostly focuses on issues that were raised in the most recent owner's survey. We had 146 responses to the survey which gives us a very good sense of what owners think and where our future projects should focus.

As you will see, owners continue to be very happy with Marcus Beach, the board and the staff. That said, there were still lots of suggestions for improvements and enhancements. One consistent theme is that the view of the lake from our cottage porches has become obscured over time by plant growth (trees, alders, ragweed etc.). The Board is very aware of this issue and is developing a multi-year plan on how to get our sightlines back, while maintaining the "look and feel" that we all enjoy so much. A separate letter will be sent to all owners outlining our proposed plan to deal with this issue.

Another common request in the survey was for new purchases; suggestions ranged from sailboats to better sound systems, bigger TV's, Keurig coffee makers and recliner chairs. The Board reviews every request and evaluates whether the item would be enjoyed by a large number of our owners and what sort of future financial commitment would be required. Once an item is purchased there is not just the initial cost to consider but the future replacement cost once the item inevitably needs to be replaced.

If owners want a smaller item (such as a Keurig coffee maker or room fan), the solution is often to either purchase and keep one in your bin, or to make a joint purchase with your other cottage owners. That helps keep our fees lower for all owners.

And with that, I would like to wish you, your family and friends, a very happy and relaxing time at Marcus Beach!

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Carefree
Shared Cottage
Ownership



Cottage News

...and the Survey Says

Here are the results from last summer's Owner Survey. Thank you again to everyone who took the time to share their opinions.

Owner's input is extremely valuable to make sure we are on the right track and as a source of new ideas to investigate over the coming year. Rest assured, the Board reads every single survey and comment!

The first five questions are the same every year for year-to-year comparison. Here are the results of each:

Q1: Overall, the quality of my cottage experience is being maintained and enhanced.

99% of owners answered "Satisfied" or "Very Satisfied" as compared to 97% in 2022. Most of our owners continue to be extremely happy with the investment they have made at Marcus Beach.

Q2: In general, how well do you think the Board is doing?

92% of owners answered "Excellent" or "Very Good". The 2022 result was 95%. Owners have confidence in the Board and the support is appreciated.

Q3: How well do you feel the Board manages the finances of the Marcus Beach Cottage Owners Association?

93% of owners answered, "Very Good" or "Excellent". The 2022 result was 91%.

Q4: How well do you feel the Property Manager (Linda Scott) is doing? Keep in mind all aspects of the role - ensuring cottages are kept clean and supplied, managing maintenance projects, demonstrating a good customer service attitude, helping wherever needed, etc.

96% of owners answered "Excellent" or "Very Good". The 2022 result was 91%. This was Linda's first full year as Property Manager – well done, Linda!

Q5: How well do you feel our property is being maintained?

89% of owners answered, "Very Good" or "Excellent". The 2021 result was also 89%. Please note that property maintenance is undertaken by James Allison, with help from Brian Groady during the busy summer months.

Q6: This question gauged the interest of owners in exploring the addition of central air conditioning (which would result in a special financial assessment to each owner).

While 18% of owners indicated that

they were interested, 72% of owners indicated that they were opposed to adding central air conditioning. The remaining 10% indicated that they did not have a strong opinion either for or against.

The Board is using this information as a signal that there isn't adequate support for us to pursue central air conditioning any further at this time.

Q7: If there was one thing that we could do to improve your experience at Marcus Beach, what would that be?

There were over 103 comments and suggestions ranging from ideas for new amenities to recommendations concerning property landscaping.

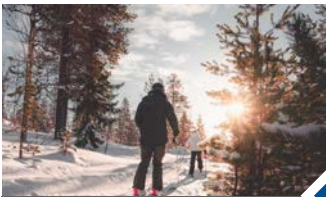
Thanks again to all who answered the survey. If you have a question, concern, or thought you'd like to share, please don't feel you have to wait for the annual survey but send an email at any time to:

marcusbeachboard@gmail.com.

Much of the remaining newsletter addresses some of the common themes that were raised by owners in the survey.



Photo courtesy of Ann Teschke



Cottage News

New Counters

The kitchen counter replacements program has begun and the counters in cottage 2,12,16 and 19 were replaced during the autumn maintenance weeks.

Cottage kitchen counters are being replaced on an “as needed” basis, so please be aware that your cottage may not get a new counter-top for several years.

The new laminate counters were picked by the owners on the Design Committee and the reaction to the new counter colour has been very positive.



New kitchen counters

Landscaping and View of the Lake

The issue of landscaping and the diminishing view of the lake from the cottage porch was raised many times in the survey. The good news is that all of the vegetation on the property is very healthy and



Photo courtesy of Jeffrey Ward

lush – the bad news is that this lush vegetation is beginning to look overgrown and is blocking our views.

The Board has a plan on how to tackle the landscaping (particularly between the cottage balcony and the lake). A separate letter will be sent to owners outlining our strategy going forward.

King-Sized Beds

A few owners inquired about switching their master bedroom queen-sized bed to king-sized. That opportunity will come when it is time to replace the mattresses in a few years (which is estimated to be around \$1,200 for the mattress and \$1,800 for the frame). At that point owners will be given the opportunity to pay an upgrade cost, knowing that the decision must be unanimous among all the owners in any particular cottage.

The last time the beds were switched, six cottages opted to move to king-sized beds and at that time the cost per owner was around \$200. Owners paid for the upgrade cost on mattresses and frames

while the Cottage Association contributed new linens.

Snow Plowing

After the first snowfall of the season owners sometimes wonder why we don't clear the road right away.

Because the roads are covered in dirt and gravel, they need to be completely frozen before snow-plows can do any clearing; if they're plowed while the roads are still soft, all the dirt and gravel get pushed to the side and then we have a big and expensive cleanup to do in the spring.

Save the Date 2023 AGM

Mark your calendars! The next AGM will be held on **Saturday, April 20th, 2024 from 10am to noon** via Zoom.

Last year we tried for a hybrid in-person / Zoom meeting but there was very little interest in the “in person” portion so the Board has opted to hold the AGM via Zoom only.



Cottage News

Property Report

By Linda Scott, Property Manager

2023 was a productive year at Marcus Beach. During last spring's maintenance period, we completed three more roofs. The last three cottages will be completed in spring 2024.

Four new hot water tanks were installed; at this point all cottages have had their water tanks replaced.

In the kitchen, all range hoods were replaced.

The new Itty-Bitty Library, installed last spring, is very well used and has lots of inventory. If you have a book you loved and are willing to let go, please consider adding it to the library!



Two new pickleball courts were added to the tennis court. The additional pickleball courts are being well-used.

Some small appliances such as microwaves, coffee makers and kettles were replaced as required.

Replacing the kitchen door blinds is an ongoing project which will be

completed in early 2024.

Living room area rugs and underpads were replaced in all nineteen cottages.

You may have noticed that we replaced the lawn tractor with a commercial model which is significantly faster and should last much longer than the previous model.



Bedding and kitchen linens were a big focus during maintenance, next on the list will be to upgrade the blankets.

For this winter, the snowplow will come on site if we have more than four inches of snow. If at all possible, please move your vehicles for the plow to remove the snow from your driveways.

Ice Rink

We had a few owners wonder why the ice rink was not available last winter. The reason was entirely due to weather. We need a week of

weather that is below -10C in order to form a sustainable sheet of ice.

The few times we had appropriate weather it was immediately followed by a thaw, so James was never able to keep the rink going.

Hopefully the current winter will be better and we will be able to keep the rink going once we get that initial freeze.

Cottage Sales

A few owners asked if we could publish more details on cottage sales, e.g. what the asking price was, how long it took to sell etc.

In truth, neither the Board nor the Property Manager is aware of those details. The only information that we are given is the final selling price and closing date, and that is so we can fulfill our legal obligations. We summarize and report those selling prices every year at the AGM.

Sales are private transactions between two parties, and unless details are volunteered by either one, we wouldn't be aware of them.





Cottage News

Photo courtesy of Ruth Lawrence



Broken Items

A few owners commented that they were disappointed that when they got to the cottage they found out that a light bulb was burnt out or perhaps the electric water kettle wasn't working.

The reason these items weren't working is because the last owner who noticed a broken kettle or burnt-out bulb didn't report it to our Property Manager (so it never got replaced).

So please, when you notice something wrong or broken, please report it right away and it will be remedied, often on the same day.

Beaches

A few owners asked whether it was possible to increase the size of the smaller (but popular) beach near Cottage 3 as well as remove the alders that line the shore along the larger beach near Cottage 8.

Unfortunately, the shoreline along the smaller beach is protected and

cannot be expanded.

The alders along the larger beach can be removed but those alders were planted years ago to both discourage geese from getting onto the property, and prevent erosion.

Additionally, the water near that shore is quite mucky with silt and weeds and not ideal for wading. Because the shoreline is protected, we are also prohibited from adding sand into the water.

Despite these minor limitations both beaches get a lot of use and have proven very popular with owners.

Fire Pits

Several owners commented that some of the fire pits are quite deep and worry that this may be a hazard to small children.

In spring 2024, the base of the fire-pits near cottages 2 and 8 will be raised up so that this is less of an issue.

Storing Boats at the Cottage

In the survey we had a few owners ask if they can leave their boats or watercraft at the cottage. The question usually comes from owners who have multiple weeks that are not back-to-back.

Unfortunately, there is simply not room to store any large items between weeks; we have many owners and Marcus Beach would get cluttered very quickly if items were not removed when the owner leaves.

Resources

There is so much to see and do in Haliburton! Here are a few resources on the Internet to help you:

Highlander Newspaper:
[The Highlander](#)

Tourism site with suggestions:
[My Haliburton Highlands](#)

County of Haliburton official site:
[Haliburton County](#)

Hiking Trails:
[Haliburton Hiking Trails](#)

Dining Suggestions:
[Restaurant Ideas](#)

Garbage and Recycling
[Minden Recycling](#)

Fishing Information
[Zone 15 Regulations](#)
[Ice Fishing Regulations](#)

Photo courtesy of Jeffrey Ward





Cottage News

Sports Equipment

In the survey we were asked a few times what equipment the cottage provides and what should owners bring with them.

In general, Marcus Beach provides the sports court (e.g. basketball, pickleball, tennis, horseshoes, etc.) but not the associated equipment (racquets, balls etc.).

There are exceptions. The sports locker generally has a basketball and Marcus Beach does supply tetherballs and horseshoes. Over time some owners have donated sports equipment but in general if you are planning to play any sport you should bring your own equipment.

Increased Cottage Occupancy

Every year in the survey a few owners inquire whether cottage occupancy can be increased from eight to ten. This question is understandable because if you include the

fold-out couch most cottages have sleeping room for ten people.

This idea was explored a few years ago and formally increasing the cottage limit beyond the existing eight occupants for overnight stays is problematic. Our insurance certificates, septic system calculations, well capacity, etc. are all based on a maximum of eight cottagers and would have to be formally re-evaluated at considerable expense if cottage occupancy were increased.

However, since at any time, many cottages are not fully occupied, we know that the well and septic system would not be overburdened if a couple of cottages had ten occupants.

Therefore, it is likely not a problem if you find you need an exception to the rule occasionally. Please let Linda know in advance if you need to exceed the limit of eight occupants.

Note that this exception applies **ONLY** to owners and not to anyone using the cottage who is not the owner.



Photo courtesy of Jeffrey Ward

Ice Safety

In every fall or winter newsletter, we caution owners to be careful on the lake ice, and this year is no different. Every year, there are tales of people falling through and snowmobiles being pulled from the icy lake, so please be careful.

The colour of the lake ice is a good indication of its strength.

- Clear blue ice is strongest
- White opaque or snow ice is half as strong as blue ice. Opaque ice is formed by wet snow freezing on the ice
- Grey ice is unsafe. The grayness indicates the presence of water

The Red Cross website is a great source of water/ice safety and is a good site to check before venturing onto the lake in the winter.

[Red Cross Ice Safety Tips](#)



Photo courtesy of Franki Robinson