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Minocqua town board wants to see landscaping plan for The Waters project

Supervisors generally support cabin project but want to address concerns

By Richard Moore
OF THE LAKELAND TIMES

The Minocqua town board expressed general support Wednesday for a conditional use permit for the construction of 22

cottages associated with The Waters of Minocqua hotel but, given neighbors' concerns about ongoing and unauthorized guest access to Clawson Lake, directed the developers to develop a land-

scaping plan to deter such access and bring it back to the town board for final review.

The plan would include conditions that any lighting be downcast, that a tree buffer on the north

boundary line be installed, and that fencing and signage also be developed to deter guests from accessing the lakefront. The developers will also assess whether

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School climate and culture talks continue at LdF

Bullying is common concern among families, many of whom find school's response to it lacking

By Kelly Holm
OF THE LAKELAND TIMES

Conversations about Lac du Flambeau Public School's willingness and ability to create a culturally respectful environment for its students continued, at the school board level, for a second straight month on April 6.

After Dr. Joshua Ernst was chosen in March to succeed retiring Dr. Larry Ouimette as superintendent, numerous community, staff and family members told the board what they wanted to see from the administration — representation of Native Americans in school leadership, more cultural programming and engagement with tribal elders for the majority-Ojibwe student population, and greater respect from staff for students and their culture.

"I came at the last meeting, and I voiced my opinion about what I think could be more beneficial to the 95 percent of our children (in the student body) that are here on the reservation, and I did invite others to come and speak on these issues," said Bagwajikwe Madosh, the grandmother of a Lac du Flambeau first-grader, who urged fellow parents and grandparents in a Facebook post to join her at the April meeting.

In anticipation of the coming discussions, school board president Gary Smith, with help from the administration, put together a page-and-a-half-long list of Ojibwe language and culture programs and activities that the school offered. The list, which was described as non-exhaustive, was available at the meeting for attendees to look at and take home.

Bullying and student well-being concerns

Prominent concerns from community members during public comment were bullying and student mental health. Several speakers stated that their children were being bullied — including to the point of physical assault that required medical attention — or felt uncomfortable and unsafe at school. They expressed the opinion that Lac du Flambeau administration and staff were neglecting to deal with these issues and exacerbating the problem.

"I'm tired of this community caring about suicide when we're all together at funerals ... but they don't care to address a lot of the behaviors and the way that we treat each other, and the toxicity that exists in a lot of these

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SPRING SPORTS PREVIEW INSIDE!!



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TURTLE TIME

Daniel Wixson is handed an ornate box turtle by Rachel Terracina of the North Lakeland Discovery Center during the Knowledge at Noon Totally Turtles program on Wednesday, April 6, at the Frank B. Koller Memorial Library in Manitowish Waters.

Vilas County sheriff's office still seeking info in Poupart case

By Kelly Holm
OF THE LAKELAND TIMES

Blessed are the early dead.

So reads the inscription on the headstone of Lac du Flambeau woman Susan "Suzy" Poupart, who was last seen alive May 20, 1990 and whose remains were found in the Chequamegon National Forest six months later. Her death was ruled a homicide, and remains unsolved today.

"I've talked with some tribal elders. This particular case has kind of cast a shadow on the reservation," said Vilas County

Sheriff Joe Fath, who has been with the county's law enforcement for more than 40 years. "There's been a lot of deaths, and I think it all comes down to the poison that this case started. They're looking at it as a cultural healing ... until it gets resolved, it can continue to cause bad things."

When one drives into Lac du Flambeau via State Highway 47, they are met with Poupart's face, on a billboard admonishing anyone with information on her murder to speak up: Her

family deserves better, and somebody knows.

It's the same message Fath seeks to convey today, emphasizing that the case is still very much open after 32 years. The John Doe investigation that saw both public and secret hearings in 2007 never closed, and evidence that has been resubmitted several times with advances in technology is still being processed in the lab.

A 29-year-old mother of two and tribal mem-

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Plan

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the planned cottages could be moved back further from the property line to give more separation from neighboring properties.

Right now, there are two parcels in question owned by Minocqua Capital Investments, a lakefront parcel and the hotel parcel. The current conditional use permit (CUP) does not give hotel guests access to the waterfront parcel.

The original proposal for the cottages would have merged the two parcels into one, thus granting lake access to both hotel and cottage guests, and that didn't sit well with neighbors who say hotel guests already ignored the restriction and partied on the lake, creating noise and other problems.

To allay those concerns, surveyor Jimmy Rein and the developers reconfigured the plan to keep the parcels separated, with neither hotel nor cottage guests having access to the lake.

"I knew there was going to be concern from the lake members with access to Clawson Lake," Rein said at the meeting. "What we are proposing to do is adjust the lot lines that are there now. There's two lots there now, there's the lakefront parcel and the hotel parcel, and we are adjusting that lot line between the two to, again, keep lot number 1, which is the lake parcel, restricted from any access to Clawson Lake."

So, Rein said, the new cabins and the hotel itself would be restricted to only be on parcel number 2, which is the off-water parcel, therefore keeping the same condition as the original CUP and to the revisions to the CUP over the years to make sure that Clawson Lake was not

impacted by the hotel and the development of the hotel property.

According to the developer, no direct lake access is being sought, or any walking path down to the lake, or a pier. The intent is give the cabins a view of the lake but no access.

Concerns not allayed

But the new plan did not resolve the concerns of neighbors who attended the town board meeting.

They say they have had to call the police on numerous occasions about people partying on the lake parcel at very early hours in the morning, sometimes at 1 or 2 a.m. They also complained about fireworks — and not just on July 4 — and about yelling and loud music.

Police don't seem to be able catch them, the concerned neighbors said, and the events took place more than occasionally. The biggest issue was noise that carried across the water, and neighbors said they could already hear as far away as the bowling alley.

While some at the meeting suggested the new cabins might alleviate the problem — because those guests might call the hotel front desk if they are being disturbed by people using the lake parcel — others suggested they would just exacerbate the problem because they would be using the lake property, too.

The problem is, the concerned residents said, access might not be authorized, but there really is no way to enforce it.

The concerns prompted Rein to suggest the possibility of signage and fencing to deter guests from access, and he also told residents that complaints should be lodged with Oneida County zoning.

"If by chance people start utilizing that waterfront, we

can put signage up there that basically says no use for hotel patrons," he said. "I don't know how many people use it or don't use it. The whole waterfront parcel will still be restricted from access, and if there are people still utilizing it against the CUP, that's a violation of the CUP and what happens is you call the zoning department and they have to contact the person who holds the CUP and they are responsible. Technically if it happens over and over again, they technically could pull the CUP."

Oneida County zoning director Karl Jennrich explained the county's point of view.

"Currently there are two parcels," Jennrich said. "The Waters does not typically have access to Clawson Lake at this time. When they brought the proposal forward, we said that the way this development is laid out, you would have to combine the two parcels of property as one. Then all of a sudden it was thought, because Mr Hartzheim brought it up that there were concerns by individuals on Clawson Lake about past developments, that this lot should not be included as part of it."

Jennrich said the county's concerns would be specific.

"So if it does come to our attention, because this lot is not going to be a part of this CUP where these cabins are going to be placed, if the owners advertise that they are going to allow people to come across this [waterfront] parcel, if they place a pier on this parcel for the benefit of the people in this development, we call that a keyhole development and that's not allowed pursuant to the ordinance. And if it's not part of the CUP, the county has the ability to enforce."

Typically, Jennrich said, the county talks to the

holder of the CUP about violations. If that doesn't work, the county issues citations. If that doesn't work, Jennrich said, CUP revocation becomes a possibility.

"There may be people who wander on or access Clawson Lake, but again, as part of the CUP, we don't want them placing piers," he said. "We don't want them advertising. We do not want that parcel utilized for the benefits of their customers."

The neighbors said they were still concerned, and one woman said she was extremely concerned about what might happen with hunters staying in the cottages during hunting season. She wondered if the hotel allowed firearms.

"And then if it's hunting season, and they come down to our lake, and they shoot those ducks that swim or mistake our beautiful moon for a beautiful eagle who sits on my pier every day, I don't want them to be killed by drunken hunters who don't know what they are doing, and then bullets headed my way," one resident said. "I'm very worried."

Hartzheim implored residents to always call the police and the hotel when disturbances occurred, and he said oftentimes those who abuse or ignore the rules are repeat offenders who could be deterred through a variety of measures, not just signage and fencing but diligent reporting.

"I think sometimes if they just get the message that this is being paid attention to and it's being enforced — I'm not going to say that it's going to eliminate it, but it can be part of it," he said. "The fencing and the signing can help."

None of those are going to be perfect solutions, Hartzheim said.

"Because if someone wants to go somewhere, they are just going to go," he

said. "That's human nature. I think when we start talking about prohibiting guns and worrying about the possibility that somebody is going to shoot an eagle off your pier, I think maybe we're getting a little carried away. ... We're not going to go anywhere near telling this hotel whether its guests can carry weapons or not."

Balancing the interests of property owners and of neighbors was a difficult job, Hartzheim said.

"People have this commercially zoned property," he said. "They have room on the property to create additional development, and we have to find a reasonable place when the demand for housing and accommodation up here is higher than ever, and the type of accommodations that people are looking for is starting to get away from the hotel room and more toward the individual unit. It kind of hearkens back to the original separate cabins on a resort. I think it's a big win for the neighbors that this property has been physically separated from the lake."

The board formulated the conditions they would like to see in any recommendation made to the county — a landscape plan with the downcast lighting, the tree buffer on the north boundary line, and the fencing and signage.

That plan will come back to the town board for final review, which would then vote whether to recommend approval of the CUP to the county. The CUP then proceeds to the county and public hearing and a final decision by the county. The town's role is strictly advisory.

Richard Moore is the author of the forthcoming "Storyfinding: From the Journey to the Story" and can be reached at richardmoorebooks.com.

Talks

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systems in our community," Winona

Carufel, a mother of five, said. "I'm a big believer in our youth, and I really do think they have a lot of things to say ... and they are not having a good time, even the ones that are getting along fine."

Some parents, like Anthony Negan and Sarah Thompson, said that they wanted to pull their students out of Lac du Flambeau and open-enroll them in another district because of what they saw happening within the school.

"There's no follow-through once the bullying starts. We let people know what happened, and then we get nothing, other than 'I talked to the child,'" Thompson, who has four children at Lac du Flambeau, said. "Children aren't going to respond to an adult coming to them and saying, 'did you do this.' They're going to say no."

Tula Christensen offered a similar sentiment, saying that the administration was leaving families out of the loop when there was trouble.

"(My grandson) said things happen right in front of them on the playground. It's ignored. He's watched students being pushed down, and he said something to the teacher. Nothing was done, and it was the same thing again the next day," she said. "Kids get hurt in school. We don't get a phone call. We wait until they're

systems in our community," Winona

coming home limping, something's wrong with them."

Christensen later voiced interest in forming an Ojibwe language and culture immersion school, which Smith said would need to be made an agenda item for a future meeting if the board was to have discussions on the topic.

Madosh brought up the missing pictures of tribal elders which used to hang in the school hallways, a point she first raised last month. Though Ouimette said after last month's meeting that he had asked around and did not know where the posters were, they are mentioned on Smith's cultural programming list, with the statement that contact had been made with their creator and that they would be replaced.

Where does problem start?

Precious Poupart, a mother of

"I voiced my opinion about what I think could be more beneficial to the 95 percent of our children that are here on the reservation, and I did invite others to come and speak on these issues."

-Bagwajikwe Madosh, grandmother of LdF student

Lac du Flambeau students, said that often, the root of student behavioral problems started at home, and that the school staff and administration were often overwhelmed in the face of the challenges of the last few years.

"Our school's stuck in a really tough spot as far as, there's children at home who don't have the foundations to be successful. So we leave a lot of the teachers and a lot of the school staff and support staff to teach things like respect and yes and no," Poupart said. "There's a lot of kids that are getting left behind because if they do want a better education, they don't have access to it, because teachers are busy trying to maintain behavior of other children."

She went on to describe Lac du Flambeau as "a segregated school." "I see open enrollment, and I see kids flooding out of this school. I don't see kids from other commu-

nities signing open enrollment papers to Lac du Flambeau," Poupart continued. "All these feeder schools go to Lakeland (Union High School), and (those students) already feel they're a part of Lakeland. We come, and it's that much harder for our kids to fit into where they're going."

Construction and inclement weather days

During the business portion of the meeting, Ouimette said that he had reached out to several area contractors to solicit bids for the school's planned summer construction projects, but that only one contractor had submitted a bid, and it came in at twice the anticipated cost. Thus, the board rejected the bid, from Nasi Construction.

"We look at the uncertainty of the economy, and the shortage, and the uncertainty of being able to get supplies in," he said. "I just don't think it's fiscally a wise move to approve a bid at this time."

The board plans to begin the bidding process again in December, with hopes of beginning construction in summer 2023. Additionally, the board approved to increase the amount of paid inclement weather days for support staff from three to five, as the latter amounts to the district's number of inclement weather days this year.

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