

August, 2009

Sixth Public Meeting: Proposed Official Plan, Malpeque Bay Planning Board

by Hal Mills

The Municipality of Malpeque Bay includes the communities of Indian River, Hamilton, Malpeque, Baltic, Spring Valley, Darnley, and Sea View. The sixth Public Meeting hosted by the Planning Board regarding preparation of a proposed Official Plan was held July 7th, 2009 in the Malpeque Community Centre.

The main purpose of the meeting was to bring residents up to date on the status of the project and to review the mailed-out document “*Proposed Official Plan for Malpeque Bay.*” The meeting was hosted by the Planning Board that was established by Council (Members of the Planning Board are: Jeremy Stiles; Jimmy Carruthers; Stephane Senechal, and Bob Beirsto. Their planning consultant is Hal Mills). The following is a summary of what took place at the meeting:

1. Welcome and Introductions: Chairperson Jeremy Stiles welcomed the approximately 50 participants to the meeting and introduced members of the Planning Board. He welcomed Bob Beirsto, recently added to the Board by Council.
2. Status Report on Progress to Date: Jeremy gave a brief overview of background to this planning project, and progress to date. At the last meeting a commitment was made to mail a package of relevant material, including a revised document on vision, objectives and policies, to all residents. On June 15th the Planning Board made a presentation to the Commission on Land and Local Governance which included the motion passed at the previous meeting and a revised version of our draft vision, objectives and policies.
 - a. The document mailed to residents was discussed, and it was stated that some residents have not received it. It was noted that the Post Office was asked to deliver it to all mail boxes within the Municipality, leaving a problem with seasonal residents and permanent residents who receive their mail outside the Municipality. To help alleviate the problem documents were made available at the Post Office desk and the drugstore in Kensington, as well as at various locations within the Municipality.
 - b. Questions were raised regarding the specific statement on the SPA in the submission made by the Planning Board to the Commission on Land and Local Governance. – The specific statement was read and a number of questions were raised regarding the following:
 - Is the current process of creating an official plan a “waste of time” as the Commission could override any of the planning work?

In response, the Planning Board reported that it had met with the Commission prior to our submission to discuss this specific concern, and the response from the Mr. Thompson & Mr. Arsenault was that we are not in any way wasting time to continue with the process. The Commission encouraged the Planning Board to provide feedback on our process as it is valuable information for them.

- Why are we moving forward and not just letting the Commission decide and then use the Provincial election to show our support or not for the government's decision? "*It is the Island way to let politicians make the decision and voice our opinion during the next election.*"

There was no direct response except to express the need for more self governance and being responsible for our own actions as residents of our community, rather than having decisions imposed by the Province which may not be in our best interest.

- How can we discuss the SPA when seasonal residents who pay double the taxes are not available or present during some of the meetings?

The Planning Board responded that it attempts to include and involve both permanent residents and seasonal residents in its deliberations. This prompted an animated discussion/debate regarding the rights of permanent residents vs seasonal residents to make planning decisions.

3. Commission on Land and Local Governance. Hal reviewed the mandate of the Commission and the schedule for completion of its' report by December. Commission Hearings have been completed, but it is still possible to deliver submissions to them. The need to maintain close contact with the Commission was noted as their timeframe is similar to ours. Recommendations from the Commission, and Provincial Government reactions to them, may have relevance to Official Plans throughout PEI.

There were a number of questions /comments regarding the timing of the Commissions report and its' impact on our Official Plan. For more information regarding the Commission go to www.gov.pe.ca/landandlocalgovernance, call 621-3040, or visit their office at the intersection of highways 2 and 13 in Hunter River.

4. Review of Mailed-out Document: "Proposed Official Plan for Malpeque Bay". The Planning Board then presented its revised draft *Vision, Objectives & Policies* portion of the document, leading participants through each of the 8 components. Although the Board wishes to shift focus to possible actions for implementation at the next meeting, the vision, objectives and policies will remain 'draft' until the proposed plan is completed.

- a. There was a question regarding how the vision, objectives and policies were developed.
 - Planning Board response was that we reviewed some existing plans and, using input from residents during the previous public meetings, prepared an initial draft for public review and feedback.
 - The point was made that the official plan is not to be the Planning Board's plan, it needs to be the plan developed and approved by residents.
 - b. A question was raised about the process of approval of an Official Plan for the Municipality of Malpeque Bay.
 - Response from the Board was that its mandate is to submit a 'proposed' plan to Council, and that is up to Council to decide how to determine acceptance/approval. If Council adopts the plan by resolution it then is submitted to the Province where final approval will be based on the content of the plan as well as acceptance of the plan by the residents.
5. Citizen's Committee to Identify Priority Landscapes and Viewplanes. Several sections of the mailed-out document identify the importance of maintaining priority landscapes and viewplanes, but these have not been identified as yet. It was suggested that it would be done best by a 'Citizen's Committee' tasked with submitting a report to the next public meeting. The point was raised by resident farmers and landowners that it's nice to talk about preserving viewplanes but at the end of the day there is a direct cost that needs to be paid to the landowner to preserve it. Volunteers for the Citizen's Committee were invited to sign up before leaving (the volunteers are: Katherine Dewar, Earle Lockerby, John Cousins, Sally Blake Hooff, Clair Sudsbury, and Wayne Cousins).

A suggestion was put forward that the Planning Board might also want to create committees to look at possible actions for other components of plan implementation.

6. Next Steps: A report on this public meeting will be published in the County Line Courier, emailed to everyone on our email list, and posted on the website at www.malpequebay.ca. The next public meeting, scheduled for August 25th in Hamilton, will focus on possible actions to implement the proposed Official Plan.