



## Watershed Advisory Panel

### Draft - Meeting Notes for December 15, 2016

#### PRESENT:

##### Panel Members:

Mary Henderson  
Jeff Huska  
Anoop Naik  
Charles Ramcharan  
Wendy Wisniewski  
Lin Gibson  
Margaret McLaughlin  
Sarah Woods  
Ed Snucins  
John Gunn  
Derrick Luetchford  
Burgess Hawkins  
Richard Auld

##### City Staff:

Taylor Menard  
Stephen Monet  
Paul Javor  
Lana Haslam

##### Public Attendance:

None

#### REGRETS:

Lilly Noble  
Paul Truskoski  
Councillor Signoretti

#### ADVISORY PANEL BUSINESS

- Handouts: (1) Draft meeting notes from November meeting  
(1) Agenda for December 15 meeting

#### PRESENTATIONS

- Paul Javor provided an update on the status of the current sub-watershed studies.
- Stephen Monet gave a presentation/lead discussion regarding the pros and cons of a mandatory septic re-inspection program vs. the pros and cons of a mandatory septic pump out program.

#### DISCUSSIONS

- Chair Lin Gibson, mentioned that the Panel members just arrived from a tour of the Biosolids plant located at the Sudbury Wastewater Treatment Plant on Kelly Lake Rd. She gave her thanks and appreciation for City staff and Walker Environmental Manager for organizing and providing this excellent tour.

- Lin reminded the Panel members that she will be stepping down as Chair of the Watershed Advisory Panel and Mary will be stepping down as Vice-Chair in 2017. Both had agreed at the very first meeting to take on the role of Chair and Vice-Chair but only for one year in order to give other Panel members an opportunity.
- Sub-watershed Studies Update: Paul Javor gave the panel a short update on the sub-watershed studies. He stated that the Whitewater sub-watershed study closed today.
- Proposals for the two first studies have resulted in excess funds left over from the initial funding agreement with the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change (MOECC). The City has been in talks with the MOECC to create a plan to best utilize the remaining funds. Paul Javor stated that he hopes to have a plan for the funds by the New Year. He will share more information with the Panel at that time.
- The first public information session for the Junction Creek study will hopefully take place in January, 2017. Paul stated that the information session for the Ramsey Lake sub-watershed study went very well.
- John Gunn asked about the status of the Golder & Associates water quality platform that will be put into Ramsey Lake. Paul Javor confirmed that the platform is actively being built; some specialized parts require a 12 week lead time but the platform will be ready for deployment in April 2017. Data will be collected every 10 minutes and be transmitted every 1 hour to the City website through a web application. There will be a media release prior to the launch of the platform.
- **ACTION:** Sub-watershed update in January – Paul Javor
- LID (Low Impact Development) Sarah Woods: deferred her LID presentation until the January meeting but gave a short overview of what LID is and means to the community. The Junction Creek Stewardship has obtained funding to implement a LID project site within their sub-watershed. The principle of LID is to help hold water where it has fallen. This can be very difficult in the Sudbury area due to the shallow soils over bedrock in many areas. Implementation of this project won't be done until 2018.

#### Pros & Cons of a mandatory septic pump out vs. mandatory septic re-inspection program

- Stephen Monet explained the need to discuss the relative merits of a mandatory septic system pump out program versus a mandatory septic system re-inspection program. The Sudbury & District Health Unit (SDHU) is the principal authority in our area with full responsibilities of Part 8 of the Ontario Building Code. The SDHU have indicated in the past that they would not be initiating a septic system re-inspection program other than that required by the Greater Sudbury Source Protection Plan. It seemed appropriate at this time to explore another option that would serve to systematically assess septic

systems in the City. Although not without its challenges, a mandatory septic system pump out program might provide a level playing field for all residences not connected to municipal wastewater services. It is also important to more fully understand what is involved in a septic system re-inspection and explore the trade-offs and similarities of a mandatory septic system pump out program.

- Stephen Monet provided an overview of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) septic system re-inspection guidelines. Principal Authorities (can be municipalities, health units or conservation authorities depending on the area) have considerable flexibility in how the re-inspections are undertaken. These inspections can involve visual assessments of the tile bed and covered septic tank only or can request the homeowner to remove the cover of the septic tank in advance to allow the inspector to assess the condition of the inside of the tank and depth of sludge layer. Some inspections require the septic tank to be pumped prior to inspection. Others involve up to two phases: a visual inspection of the tile field and covered tank first and, if remedial actions or further investigations are required, a second, more detailed involved inspection is conducted. Septic system re-inspections generally cost a homeowner between \$120 and \$150. The frequency of the re-inspections is at the discretion of the principle authority but are generally conducted every three years for permanent residences and every five years for seasonal ones. A 2011 MMAH document entitled “On-Site Sewage System Maintenance Inspections” can be found downloaded from: <http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Asset9158.aspx>.
- The specific case of Wellington County was presented based on a report prepared by WSP, the firm that is contracted in that municipality to administer and undertake the septic system re-inspections. In that municipality, homeowners are issued a certificate if no visible indications of an unsafe sewage system are noticed following a visual inspection and an inspection of the uncovered septic tank. If remedial actions are required, homeowners receive a letter outlining the remedial actions that need to be acted on within a certain time frame. WSP reports that in 2015, of the 428 systems inspected, a total of 86 remedial action letters were issued representing 20% of the total number of systems inspected. This percentage falls within the general range of 20% to 25% for remedial action requirements following re-inspections as reported in other jurisdictions. WSP further reports that a total of 83% of the remedial actions are associated with regular maintenance issues (i.e., septic tanks requiring pump outs or entering into service agreements with haulers for holding tanks or with installers for tertiary treatment systems. Seventeen percent of the remedial actions may result in more substantial studies, repairs or replacements. Again, these percentages are within the typical range of those reported in other jurisdictions. The WSP report can be downloaded from: <http://wellingtonwater.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/WSP-Septic-Socials-2016.pdf>.

- A mandatory septic system pump out program could be evaluated as an alternative to a mandatory septic system re-inspection program. The municipalities of North Bay, Callander, and East Ferris currently have by-laws for mandatory septic pump outs. A consideration would need to be whether the program would apply area-wide or to specific, high risk areas. Haulers are currently required to fill out a manifest when bringing material to the biosolids plant. The manifest contains, among other information, the address of the residence where sewage was pumped as well as whether the inside of the tank was 'good' or 'poor'. By the nature of their work, haulers are assessing, at a certain level, the proper functioning of the septic system that they are pumping out. There is the potential for additional information to be included on the manifest. A mandatory septic pump out program would not result in extra inspection costs to the homeowners since pump outs should be done routinely to maintain a septic system in proper working order. Given that haulers are required to provide a manifest, homeowners would not need to show proof that their septic system was pumped.
- During the discussion, the SDHU staff stated that a septic system pump out is beneficial to the effective lifespan of a septic system. In their opinion, whether a system is pumped out or not does not have any effect on the amount of nutrients that will enter the lake; all of the phosphorus and nitrogen present in the system will eventually reach the lake although it is possible that the nature of soils present in Greater Sudbury may effectively and permanently immobilize phosphorus near the tile fields. Ed Snucins mentioned that the potential for phosphorus retention in tile fields has been identified by an academic researcher (Dr. Will Robertson, University of Waterloo).
- Jeff Huska stated that a pump out program would not be as effective as a re-inspection program unless the hauler is given authority to ensure that any remedial actions are followed through within a reasonable time frame. This would not likely happen as this is not the haulers role. SDHU staff also expressed that the hauler may be in a conflict as they may lose business if they report system malfunctions. It is the duty of a hauler, however, to report a failed system wherein sewage is present on the ground. SDHU staff stated that sewage on the ground would not be tolerated by either the homeowner or by neighbours and would be reported to the SDHU anyhow.
- SDHU staff advised that many inspection programs are voluntary. The goals of a mandatory septic pump out program would need to be elaborated prior to program initiation. Also, the administrators of the program would need to determine which properties have septic systems. Finally, SDHU staff advised that the City may not have the legal authority to pass a by-law for a mandatory septic system pump out program since, in this geographic area, the SDHU is designated the principal authority by the Province.

- SDHU stated that if a person reported that a neighbour had a failed system, the person's name could not be discovered through another person applying for a Freedom of Information request. The SDHU does follow-up on anonymous complaints, however, once the complaint is given, SDHU staff cannot follow-up if additional information or questions arise.

ACTION: Stephen Monet is tasked with identifying the number of properties that are serviced by private sewage systems in Greater Sudbury.

#### **ITEMS TABLED FOR NEXT MEETING**

- LID (Low Impact Development) presentation - Sarah Woods
- Sub-watershed studies update

#### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- None

#### **NEXT MEETING – DATE & TIME**

- The next Watershed Advisory Panel meeting will be held on January 19th from 5:00-7:00pm in room C-11 at Tom Davis Square, 200 Brady St.