

From: **Victoria Point Ratepayers Association**

TO: The Residents of Victoria Point area

RE: Invitation and Notice of the General Meeting.....Time for Action!

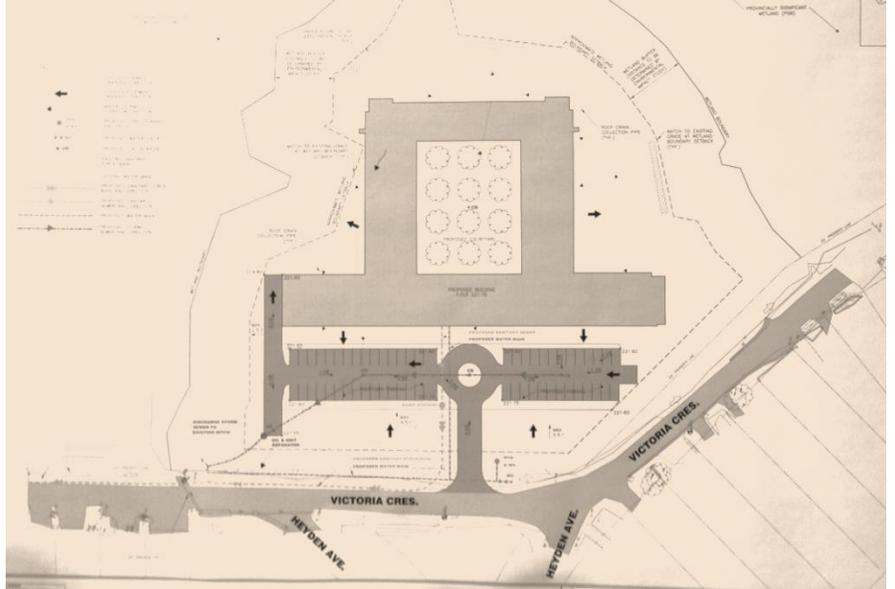
Please come on Tuesday, May 20, 2014 at Orillia Christian School Gym 7pm–9pm

1) BACKGROUND:

A Toronto-area developer, River Oaks Group is preparing to submit a request for a zoning amendment in order to construct a **140 unit retirement residence** on Victoria Crescent, across from Heyden Avenue. This higher density requires a formal application for a **zoning change**. The impact of such a facility, larger than Leacock Place, located here, away from city amenities, amid pristine ecologically sensitive wetlands, requires some **critical examination**.

On January 15th, the developer hosted a public information evening to which all property owners within close proximity (400 feet) were invited. Only the **minimum required residents near the wetlands were given notice**, the rest of us were not informed. The meeting attendance was beyond the developer's expectations and the general feeling from the residents was that this project should not proceed as requested. It was made clear that this project would utilize all available land that is not specifically designated wetlands and that **most trees would be cleared** to accommodate the 3 storey building and corresponding parking lot.

Over one hundred residents have signed up with the VPRA to be kept informed. Many more of us affected were not in attendance. The Victoria Point Ratepayers Association has been rekindled and a few of us started meeting to share ideas and to begin formulating a plan of action.



2) VPRA INITIAL CONCERN:

Aside from the **environmental** concerns, the question of services such as sewer, sidewalks, bus service and heavy truck traffic was not adequately addressed at the presentation. We were left with the understanding by the developer that most of this would fall on the City to plan, fund, implement and maintain.

On the environmental side, it was pointed out by residents that the wetlands and the smaller limited upland, work hand in hand as part of the ecosystem. Anyone that knows what an amphibious animal is knows that building over the uplands, particularly in such a high density, is not conducive to a sustainable environment.

3) DRAFT POSITION:

A retirement residence, in this location, simply **makes no sense**. The residents and the city have previously successfully challenged this same developer at the OMB. This impending request for higher density zoning **goes against the existing zoning** allowed by the Ontario Government OMB decision (PL970556). **How is the City going to approach this re-zoning request?** We are certainly not anti-development in Orillia, but we are opposed and question the logic behind existing protected and adjacent lands being **targeted for zoning change** when there is plenty of existing land for development in Orillia already properly zoned and serviced by existing infrastructure (roads, sewers, sidewalks, buses).

On our web site we list the reasons why this makes no sense to us:

- 1 The remaining **uplands are part of the wetland eco-system**. Cutting down virtually all the trees for the building and parking lot will have a detrimental effect on this balance.
- 2 Seniors will be **isolated** and removed from required facilities.
- 3 Bus service and sidewalks will need to be installed and maintained by the city at **public cost**.
- 4 There are **no parks** or gathering places and there is no access to the lake.
- 5 There is no proximity to shopping or medical facilities, services **required** by seniors.
- 6 One pretty much **needs a car** to live on the point adding to traffic on this secondary road.
- 7 The Victoria Point is a mixture of permanent homes and seasonal cottages, a fair distance from downtown. The **increased traffic** from residents, staff and visitors would change the dynamics of this neighbourhood.
- 8 This complex will be surrounded on three sides by **environmentally significant wetlands**. Many homes on Victoria Point already have **flooding issues**. Runoff from this development will only exacerbate this situation.
- 9 The existing and abundant wildlife which forms such an integral part of this community will be **detrimentally impacted**. Deer, fox, coyotes and moose are frequent visitors to the area while turtles and wild turkeys are permanent residents. The neighborhood lives in harmony with nature.
- 10 Forest Avenue has notorious water filled ditches on both sides, which would make sidewalks almost impossible, forcing the seniors to **walk on the road**.
- 11 The increased traffic (resident, visitors, employees, service and supply vehicles, paramedic and fire, taxi, etc.) on Victoria, Gill and Forest Avenue (already restricted with load limits) would stress the core of the wetland area, whereby some remaining birds and larger **wildlife would subsequently disappear**.

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4) OPTIONS SUGGESTED:

At this point the residents are **discussing 3 options**. We have neighbours that support each.

Option 1 -Try to convince the owners of the property to donate all the land to the city, **in exchange** for a more suitable site for a retirement residence within the city proper. This entire pristine wetland property should all have been designated **conservation land** a long time ago. **This option tries to set this right**. This course of action requires some vision by our elected officials, land owners, area residents and conservation groups that should be bold enough to take action. Working together co-operatively could make this happen. In years to come, one may consider nature trails and other environmental features, turning this area into a learning experience for future generations. This would benefit our kids and would turn this wetland into a productive and viable visitor attraction for the city.

Option 2 -Support the **current zoning** as designated by the OMB in 1998 and is the current City of Orillia plan. This OMB ruling was a compromise that allowed the land owner to **build low density homes** on the 2 areas of higher ground that might be suitable for development. There are many environmental restrictions placed on such development. Supporters of this position feel that although the developer's proposal has changed, **none of the environmental factors have changed**. Given today's tighter environmental regulations, the OMB may not even allow what was granted 16 years ago. This is an option for the **status quo** that opposes the requested zoning change on the basis that **there is no compelling reason for the city to deviate** from the current designation.

Option 3 -Support the developer in his request for a higher density zoning change that would build a 140 unit complex on Victoria Point. Currently, only plans for one of the areas have been put forward. The other area, (corner Forest and Victoria) has not been discussed but a higher density zoning may also be requested. The developer would essentially **build on both small areas of higher ground** and turn over the larger parcel of **land which is unsuitable for building**, to a conservation authority for stewardship.

In each of these options, the matter of the **Lankin Canal** needs to be addressed. The canal is currently owned by the developer and most Lankin residents would like to see the disputed land between their property and the canal resolved.

5) IMMEDIATE ACTION:

Your neighborhood **needs your help**. We need to come together and make our voice heard, and **take action** to address this issue. It is vitally important that we all make it clear to our elected representatives, that this suggested zoning change is ill conceived and detrimental to the environment, the neighbourhood and will be costly to the City of Orillia, and the ratepayers.

The VPRA is made up of **people like you**, who are busy, but who are concerned enough to commit a little bit of their time. Please join us via the www.VPRA.ca website, or you may contact the interim coordinators Gerry Metzger at gmetzger@rogers.com or Jeremy Rasmussen at jeremy@rasmussen.ca. Your information will not be made public.

6) GENERAL MEETING:

A **General Meeting of the Victoria Point Ratepayers Association** will be held on **May 20th** in the gym, in the Orillia Christian School (Gill and Hwy 12), from 7:00 to 9:00 pm. At that time we would like to **hear from all residents** before the association formulates an official position.

The meeting will introduce the Ratepayers Association **Constitution and By-Laws** and **hold elections** of 9 Board members. If you would like to **nominate** one of your neighbours to represent you on the board, please submit the name to us 1 week before the meeting so that we may contact them and **place them on the slate**. Please send such names (address and phone) to our interim secretary Sonia at smborgman@rogers.com or call Gerry at **705-812-0831**.

Before and after the meeting you will have an opportunity to officially **join the Ratepayers Association**, if you have not already done so. The membership fee is \$20 per household per year and is completely voluntary. At the meeting we ask all to drop a Toonie into the coin jar to help cover the rental of the hall, equipment and required insurance coverage.

At the meeting we will cover;

- 1 The resurrection of the VPRA with related business (please see **proposed Constitution and By-Laws** on web site)
- 2 Election of board members
- 3 Introduction of subcommittees
- 4 Update on the progress so far
- 5 Discussion of the 3 options above
- 6 A 30 minute question and answer period
- 7 Formulation of our position (consensus)
- 8 Our next steps

We hope to see you there.

7) MEMBERSHIP:

Membership is **open to all area residents** of Victoria Point, which is defined as that part of Orillia which is South of Hwy 12, from Gill to the Collins boat launch. Membership in the association is open now. As some of your volunteering neighbours speak to you at your door, you may **sign our member list** or you may sign up at the meeting. You will receive a receipt for your \$20 membership fee which is good for your entire household. Receipts will serve as your authorization to vote, (one vote per household). Associate (non-voting) memberships are available free of charge.

We do not intend to be a single issue association, nor do we plan to go away when this crisis is resolved. The association will continue to serve ALL residents in our designated area **by protecting your interests** today and in the future. We want to be a vibrant part of our city, with several planned community events, to help raise awareness and funds, to **protect our neighbourhood's dominant natural feature, the wetlands**.

Please join, have a say, and be part of this local, very worthwhile cause. Your neighbours and all the threatened wildlife around us, will thank you.

See you at the meeting on Tuesday, May 20th!