



NEWS NORFOLK & REGION

Norfolk rethinking Hastings Drive



By Monte Sonnenberg, Simcoe Reformer
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Camping trailers have returned to vacant lots on Hastings Drive in Long Point now that some property owners are insisting on the right to enjoy their land. Hastings Drive was declared off limits to new development in 1985 after a severe winter storm wiped out 16 cottages there. (MONTE SONNENBERG Simcoe Reformer)

LONG POINT - A section of Long Point that was declared off limits following a severe winter storm 30 years ago may be easing its way back to recreational uses.

This week, Norfolk council directed staff to prepare a report on the county's options regarding land-use regulations on Hastings Drive. The report will serve as the basis for an interim control bylaw giving council extraordinary powers to determine what is allowed in the affected zone.

"It will allow us to determine acceptable and unacceptable land uses on Hastings for however long we choose to have the bylaw," says Windham Coun. Jim Oliver. "The last shoreline management report was done in 1985. That study is out of date. We're overdue to do this."

A storm in December, 1985, destroyed 40 cottages in Long Point. Sixteen of these were on Hastings Drive. The storm hit at a time of historically high water levels in Lake Erie. Total damage was estimated at \$10 million.

No one was killed. However, the former Haldimand-Norfolk Region responded by imposing a hazard land designation on Hastings. The designation forbids development or occupation of affected properties. Cottages that survived the storm were exempt.

Owners of vacant lots on Hastings have lobbied in recent years for the right to use their beachfront for recreational purposes. Some have pitched tents there despite the hazard designation while others have situated camping trailers.

Simcoe Coun. Peter Black and Norfolk Mayor Charlie Luke are opposed to liberalizing land use on Hastings. However, Black says there appears to be a majority on council who think otherwise. Among them is Simcoe Coun. Doug Brunton.

"If you own land, I believe you have certain rights to it," Brunton said Tuesday. "There are too many rules in this bloody land. If people own this land, how can we tell them to get lost?"

The restrictive provisions on Hastings are among the most contentious in Norfolk's new zoning bylaw. Affected property owners are fighting for their right to use their land as they see fit.

An argument has emerged that camping trailers are actually vehicles and not structures as defined by the zoning bylaw. As such, some zoning provisions against new construction don't apply to them.

Coun. Black favours an interim bylaw that gives council the authority to move these trailers out of the hazard zone. Black feels Hastings Drive remains dangerous. He worries Norfolk will be called upon for emergency services that the county can't deliver. Black said this week that trailer owners on Hastings are flouting the law.

"You cannot put a trailer on a vacant piece of land anywhere in Norfolk," he said Tuesday.

Luke also believes campers on Hastings are putting themselves at risk.

"I don't personally believe we need to put trailers on vacant land on Hastings," the mayor said. "Will we see another storm of that magnitude? It is inevitable."

Council expects to receive the staff report before its summer break. Luke said the plan is to cobble an interim control bylaw from it and later adopt something more permanent on the basis of a lakeshore study that the Long Point Region Conservation Authority will undertake. Port Rowan Coun. Noel Haydt has declared a conflict-of-interest because he is a property owner on Hastings Drive.

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