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Five days set aside for final appeal of Hastings decision

By Monte Sonnenberg, Simcoe Reformer
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Hastings Drive at Long Point. (Simcoe Reformer file photo)

SIMCOE - Norfolk staff and consultants have devoted hundreds of hours over the past two years to the study of Hastings Drive in Long Point.

Many hours as well have been spent at Norfolk council debating their findings.

All that has been learned about this unique neighbourhood culminates next week in a hearing before the Ontario Municipal Board.

Monday through Friday have been set aside to hear arguments for and against more intensive uses of this hazard-land area.

On one side are appellants Ellen and Suzanne Boyce. The sisters own two cottages at the east end of Hastings Drive.

Represented by Hamilton lawyer Brian Duxbury, the Boyces want restrictive land-use provisions written into Norfolk's official plan governing future uses on Hastings Drive.

On the other side are 35 private land owners who want some recreational access to their properties. Their waterfront lots are vacant but they are enthusiastic about the idea of overnight access and the use of camping trailers and recreational vehicles on their property.

This group is represented by Hamilton lawyer Nancy Smith and planning consultant Michael Crough, also of Hamilton.

The Ministry of Natural Resources will also be represented, as will Norfolk County. Norfolk will be represented by Hamilton lawyer Peter Tice. Norfolk council has instructed Tice to listen in and stand on guard for the county's interests.

Hastings Drive was once a vibrant part of the resort residential community in Long Point. Dozens of cottages there were wiped out in a severe winter storm in 1985. The storm occurred at a time of record-high water levels in Lake Erie.

The former Haldimand-Norfolk Region responded by declaring this part of Long Point a hazard-land area.

Thirty years after the fact, Norfolk County decided to revisit this designation. There have been no storms comparable to 1985 and some on council wonder if current policies infringe on property rights.

In counterpoint, the Boyces want clear, restrictive language written into Norfolk's official plan regarding Hastings Drive.

Next week's hearing begins Monday at 11 a.m. at Governor Simcoe Square with opening statements. If necessary, the fifth and final day of the hearing begins next Friday at 9 a.m. and is scheduled to wrap up at 5 p.m.

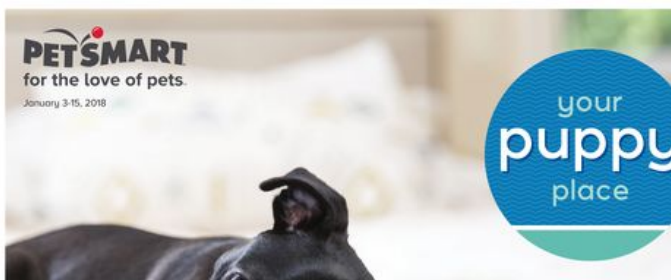
The hearing is significant because the OMB is the land-use appeals body of last resort in Ontario. Whatever the OMB decides is the law and ultimately governs the direction of any issue that comes before it.

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