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Productive meetings for town council members at 2019 ROMA conference

Wasaga Beach – Mayor Nina Bifulchi and fellow members of council spent a productive three days at the Rural Ontario Municipal Association conference in Toronto, Jan. 27-29.

“The conference is a good opportunity for us as your elected representatives to learn about municipal and provincial trends, policies, and other matters relevant to good government,” Mayor Bifulchi said. “The highlight for council was meeting with Michael Tibollo, Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport, as well as Rod Phillips, Minister of Environment, Conservation, and Parks. We had productive discussions with both ministers and look forward to working with their ministries on issues important to our community.”

The face-to-face with Minister Tibollo on Monday allowed the town to brief the minister on the strong working relationship between his ministry and the municipality.

The town advised Minister Tibollo it has paused the community hub project while it determines the best locations for a library and twin pad arena.

The town also told the minister that in the coming weeks, council would determine the municipality’s role in the redevelopment of the Main Street area and the beachfront.

The session also allowed the town to request provincial assistance for its municipal rebranding efforts.

As well, the town made it clear “expedited” provincial approvals would be helpful in terms of ensuring the new casino in Wasaga Beach can open by the second quarter of 2020.

The town told the minister it would like to work with the ministry to better promote the area.

The town also made a request, on behalf of the local business community, asking for details about what assistance there might be to improve the marketing of tourism-related businesses.

“Minister Tibollo showed a genuine interest in our community and we are thankful for his time at ROMA,” Mayor Bifulchi said.

Meeting with Minister Phillips on Tuesday, the town advised that 2018 was the second year of a five-year agreement between the town and the province for the town to manage a portion of Beach Area 1 and 2.

The town told the minister that in the coming weeks it will review the Beach 1 and 2 agreement to determine if it should continue. Maintenance costs and the cost of enforcement on the beachfront are a concern for the town. The town inked a five-year deal to manage Beach 1 and 2 in 2017.

The town also raised with the minister the need for new washrooms at New Wasaga and Allenwood. The town indicated it is willing to manage the procurement process and assist with the construction.

As well, the town advised Minister Phillips that it looks forward to providing input when the first draft is released of the Wasaga Beach Provincial Park Plan this spring.

During the meeting, the town also discussed the need for greater promotion of winter activities at Wasaga Beach Provincial Park. The town indicated a willingness to work in partnership with the province promoting the area.

The town also asked for the creation of a consistent trail surface through the park and expressed a willingness to work with Ontario Parks on the project.

As well, the municipality asked for maintenance of the Piping Plover habitat in the New Wasaga/Allenwood Beach area. The town is asking that light raking take place when the birds have left for the season. Town officials told the province the area is popular with residents and visitors but it needs maintenance.

Upon release of the new Wasaga Beach Provincial Park Master Plan, the town advised Minister Phillips it would like to meet with provincial officials and review the park boundary. The town would like to trade land that Ontario Parks is interested in adding to the park for lands deemed surplus to the park.

“Minister Phillips was receptive to our requests and we anticipate further healthy dialogue with his ministry,” Mayor Bifulchi said.

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