

Full Authority
19 November 2015
Agenda Item: 14

McGeachie Cottage

The McGeachie Conservation Area is located in Hastings County, on Steenburg Lake, and has approximately 500 acres of land. This land was donated by Jack and Ethel McGeachie in 1994. McGeachie Conservation Area has many walking trails throughout the property. The property has a creek, beaver ponds, wildlife and acres of wetlands. Also located on the property is the original homestead (known as the Conley-Drinkwater home) built nearly 150 years ago. The cottage has undergone many upgrades with two notable additions to the original homestead, upgrades to the foundation, roof and interior renovations. It is now rented out to the public as a rustic cottage primarily for vacations in the summertime and shoulder seasons.

The cottage is also offered for rent during the winter season. In past years, typically there would be a rental during the period between Christmas and the beginning of the new year. In addition, there would be the occasional rental for snowmobilers since the cottage is very close to snowmobile trails. If snow conditions were still good late in the season, there have been times in the past when the cottage has been rented during the March break.

There are pros and cons to offering the cottage for rent in the winter off season. The chart below indicates the past two years of expenses and revenues.

Year	Hydro/Heat	Cleaning	Snow Plowing	Total Expenses	Rental Income	Net Gain/(Loss)
2013	\$4,178.25	\$360	\$298	\$4,836	\$1,201	(\$3,635)
2014	\$4,234.82	\$540	\$313	\$5,087	\$1,591	(\$3,496)
2015	\$2,344					

There are no guarantees regarding revenue, but it has been fairly consistent in the offseason. Therefore, based on the above, there is not sufficient revenue to cover the expenses of keeping the cottage open. Based on the actuals and first glance, it does not appear feasible to keep the cottage open in the winter.

However, the following expenses and intangible items must also be taken into consideration:

- 1) There would be expenses to winterize and then reopen the cottage in the spring, thereby eroding some of the savings
- 2) The plumbing is an older system put together over the years in a rather haphazard convoluted fashion. It works, however, it may not drain completely to avoid

- some of the pipes bursting. Therefore, frozen pipes will cost extra to fix or replace.
- 3) A cold winter with little snow could freeze the water line to the well and break. This has occurred in the past.
 - 4) Rentals during the winter means increased number of stops at the cottage and therefore keeping on top of the mice population. Additional cleaning may be required in the spring if there are fewer visits to the cottage in the winter.
 - 5) No heat in the cottage may cause structural damage to the original part of the cottage, or affect paint and drywall in the cottage.

Recommendation:

- 1) The cottage be offered for rent this November-December to honour this year's commitment, but heat be reduced to maximize savings during this period.
- 2) The cottage not be rented for the period between January and April, but the heat be maintained at a minimum to prevent damage to the structure and avoid plumbing issues.
- 3) Staff monitor the cottage for signs of issues or problems during the January to April period and take the necessary corrective action if required.