

Crystal Lake Resort Village Feasibility Study on Hold for Now

November, 2019

This is a joint communication from the Crystal Lake Planning Committee and the Crystal Lake Hamlet Board

At the 2018 Crystal Lake Hamlet Annual General Meeting, a motion was passed for the Hamlet Board to look into the feasibility of the Organized Hamlet of Crystal Lake forming a resort village. Such a resort village structure would be a legal municipal entity of its own, completely separate from, and no longer part of, the RM of Keys. The Planning Committee took on the work of completing the feasibility study.

Over the past 16 months, considerable research and investigations were carried out by the Planning Committee members to gain information to evaluate the feasibility of forming a resort village. This included detailed assessment of financial implications, identifying and planning for the governance, and options for services that would have to be provided by a new resort village. Although the motion was to look at the feasibility of forming a Resort Village, and not actually applying for that status, there are basic requirements set out in *The Municipalities Act* and *The Municipalities Regulations* for the Minister of Government Relations to consider in deciding to approve an application for a new resort village. Satisfying those requirements is core to the feasibility of forming a resort village.

To be considered by the Minister for the establishment of a resort village, an organized hamlet may apply for incorporation when:

1. The most recent census shows a population of 100 or more people;
2. A total permanent and seasonal population of at least 300 people is demonstrated;
3. There are at least 150 separate dwelling units or business premises;
4. The taxable assessment is at least \$35,000,000;
5. The community is predominantly of a resort nature; and
6. All other criteria and application requirements for incorporation are met.

At the start of the feasibility study, the number of permanent residents at Crystal Lake was 92, according to the 2016 Statistics Canada Census. It was thought that starting with that base number, and accounting for known additions to and deletions from the population since 2016, that the population requirement would be satisfied or be very close. The idea of doing our own formal census to determine the actual number of permanent residents was approved at the 2019 AGM. However, over the course of the feasibility study and an informal internal census, it was determined that a formal census was not warranted due to the likelihood that the required 100 permanent population would not be reached.

At 2019, the full taxable assessment for the OH of Crystal Lake is \$31,583,950. This is close to the required \$35,000,000 total assessment but it does not yet meet that standard. With a number of assessments pending, based on recent and ongoing construction at Crystal Lake, it is very probable that the total assessed value will increase in the near future.

The situation now is that Organized Hamlet of Crystal Lake does not satisfy two of the requirements to even apply for a resort village incorporation. These conditions greatly impact the feasibility study. Had it been just one shortcoming, there may have been an opportunity for consideration if the numbers (population AND assessment) were consistently trending upwards. But, after discussion with Ministry of Government Relations' representatives, it is very unlikely we could make the case for creating a new resort village with two required conditions not being met.

There is no current ability for Crystal Lake incorporating as a resort village. As such, the Planning Committee and the Hamlet Board have agreed that the Resort Village Feasibility Study will be put on hold at this time. We will continue to monitor the permanent population and the taxable assessment until one or both of these requirements is satisfied. At that time, a decision will be made whether to reconvene the feasibility study.

It should be noted, that the formal application for the formation of a resort village does not have to be submitted by the respective hamlet board. It can be submitted by petition by a group of individuals provided the petition requirements are met. However, it is felt at this time that such a petition would not be acted upon or be successful due to the two requirements (population and assessment) still not being satisfied.

In the meantime, the Hamlet Board will continue pursuit of a mail-in ballot voting system. A motion for the RM Administrator to prepare a draft mail-in ballot bylaw was passed at the August, 2019 RM of Keys Council meeting. In addition, considerable work is being done on a formal Provision of Service Agreement between the RM of Keys and the Organized Hamlet of Crystal Lake. This Service Agreement will clearly define roles, services provided and agreed-upon methods for sharing of specific costs between the RM and the Hamlet.

The decision to put the Resort Village Feasibility Study on hold at this time, is a joint decision fully supported by the undersigned:

Crystal Lake Planning Committee

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and

Crystal Lake Hamlet Board

Don Olson, Howard Fox, Brad Tokaruk