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CANADA

What's going on here? Georgian Bay debates marina's new sewage system

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A proposed sewage system for a popular marina in Georgian Bay's Honey Harbour is garnering public debate over its potential impact on the environment.

The case of Brandy's Cove Yachting Centre and its plans for a new sewage system went before the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal on April 22. Opponents argue the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks needs to redo the approval it gave to the Brandy's Cove design report back in 2020.

"The overall concern, I think here is, it doesn't appear — at least to the public — that the proper environmental focus has been taken here to protect the environment and the fish habitat around Brandy's Island," said Coun. Allan Hazelton of the Georgian Bay township.

Environmental lawyer David Donnelly, representing Georgian Bay's concerned residents, submitted his arguments to the tribunal on April 27. The tribunal will deliberate over the evidence and arguments brought forward during the case. It did not provide a timeline for when it will present its decision, which will determine the fate of the Brandy's Cove project.

JUST THE FACTS:

Brandy's Cove Yachting Centre is a marina on Brandy's Island, in operation since 1972. According to the marina's website, it can host more than 100 boats, up to 55 feet in length.

In February 2020, the yachting centre submitted a new design report for its sewage system, which would treat the waste water materials of boats in the marina. The ministry issued an official approval in May for the sewage system, to be located at 4105 Brandy's Island Road. The official approval is called an Environmental Certificate Approval.

According to Hazelton, members of the township and the Eastern Georgian Bay Protective Society "threw up the flag" when they heard of this project, concerned about the negative consequences for Georgian Bay's shoreline and the ripple effects of approving this decision for marinas, provincially.

Georgian Bay council directed staff to launch a peer review of Brandy's Cove design report. Engineering company Cambium Inc. published its review in June highlighting about a dozen potential issues with the design not complying with the township's zoning bylaws and official plan.

A second peer review, funded by the protective society, found another issue: The design of the sewage system's daily flow was based on historical data from 2012 and 2016. "It is unclear why 2017, 2018 and 2019 pump-out data were not included in the analysis," the review stated.

Opponents of the current sewage plans say Brandy's Cove did not respond to the reviews' questions about the design. In September, they submitted a petition to the ministry, which received a little over 150 signatures from Honey Harbour and Georgian Bay

residents. From there, on Oct. 13, the township decided to officially submit the case to planning tribunal, formally requesting the ministry redo the Environmental Certificate Approval.

Zahraa Hmood is a Local Journalism Initiative reporter covering the municipalities of Muskoka Lakes, Lake of Bays and Georgian Bay. Her reporting is funded by the Canadian government through its Local Journalism Initiative.

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