



Staff Report

Planning and Development Services – Planning Division

Report To: Committee of the Whole
Meeting Date: November 05, 2018
Report Number: PDS.18.126
Subject: Scenic Caves Parking Lot – Project Update: Application for Official Plan Amendment, Zoning By-law Amendment and Site Plan Approval. Part Lot 16, Concession 3. Town of The Blue Mountains
Prepared by: Shawn Postma, Senior Policy Planner

A. Recommendations

THAT Council receive for information purposes Staff Report PDS.18.126, entitled “Scenic Caves Parking Lot – Project Update: Application for Official Plan Amendment, Zoning By-law Amendment and Site Plan Approval. Part Lot 16, Concession 3. Town of The Blue Mountains”;

B. Overview

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an update on the status of the Scenic Caves Parking Lot Applications.

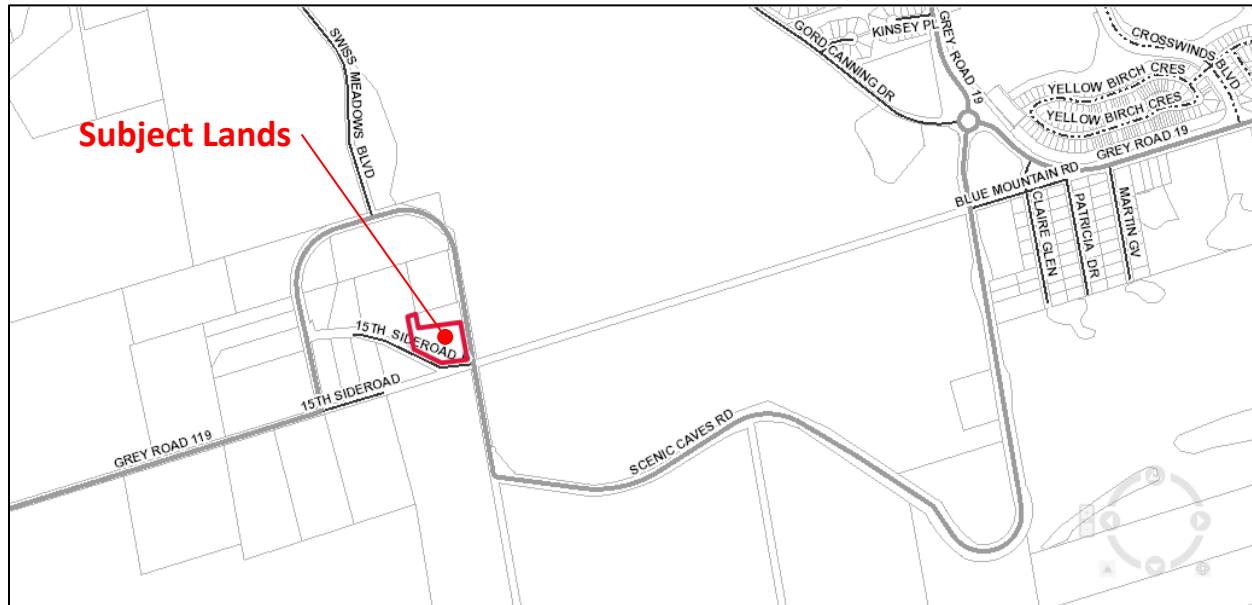
C. Background

Planning Services Division received an Application from 636697 Ontario Limited (Scenic Caves) for Official Plan Amendment, Zoning By-law Amendment and Site Plan Approval for a proposed overflow parking area serving the adjacent Scenic Caves Nature Adventures property.

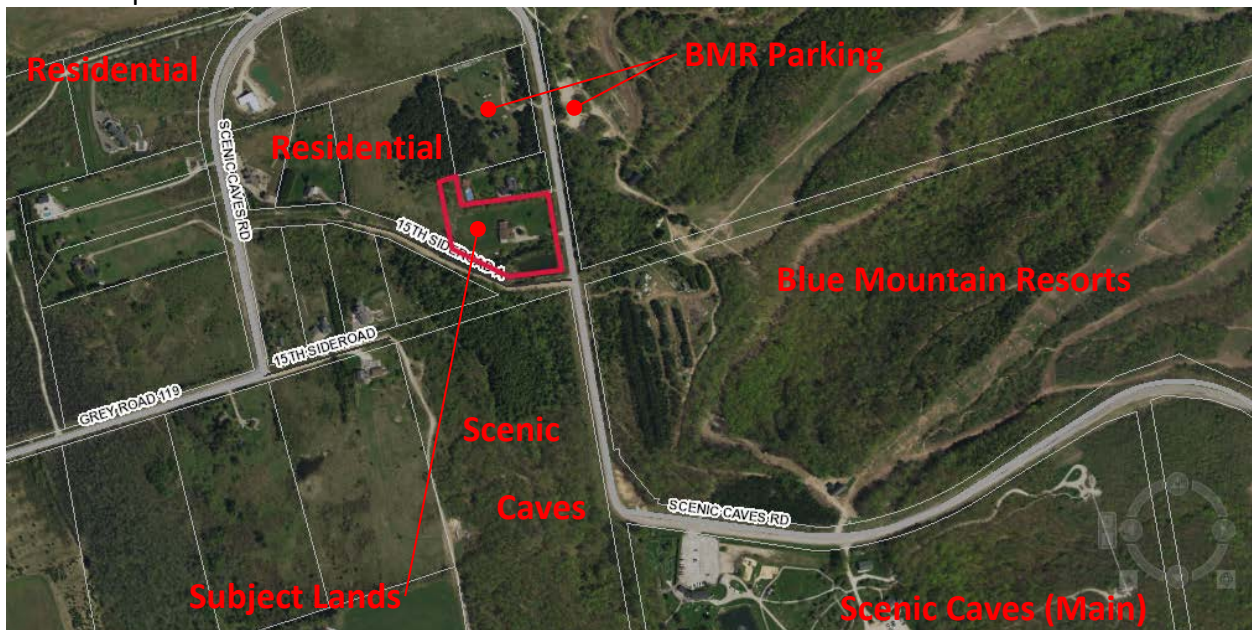
The subject lands are described as Part Lot 16, Concession 3 and are located at the northwest corner of Scenic Caves Road and 15th Sideroad ‘A’. The lands are approximately 1.25 hectares in size with 103 metres of frontage on Scenic Caves Road. The lands include an existing residential dwelling, driveway and yard and was previously used for residential purposes. The northern lot line includes a treed hedgerow, and the southern portion of property includes a watercourse and pond. Surrounding land uses include Blue Mountain Resort (parking areas, new skating loop and top of hill facilities related to the resort) are located to the East. Scenic Caves Nature Adventures main property is located directly south, across the street from 15th Sideroad ‘A’. This portion of the Scenic Caves property includes a mature forest and steep ridge associated with the Niagara Escarpment. To the North, an existing Single Detached Residential dwelling with outdoor amenity space on a 5300 square metre property. Adjacent to this parcel

is the new Blue Mountain Resorts overflow parking area supporting the Top of Hill Orchards parking area and the 2017/2018 Woodlands Skating Loop. A number of existing rural residential uses and vacant residential lots are located to the west and northwest.

Location Map



Aerial Map



In support of the applications, the Town has received a Planning Justification Report and Conceptual Site Plan Drawing.

Notice of Complete Application and Notice of Public Meeting was completed in January 2018. The Statutory Public Meeting Was held on January 29, 2018. Scenic Caves and their Planner completed a detailed overview of the project details, history of Scenic Caves as an award

winning tourist destination, history of the parking issues during peak visits, and alternative parking solutions that were considered. Comments were received from outside agencies and the general public. The concerns raised include the following:

Issue	Comment
Environmental	1. Updated Hazard Zone boundaries required to recognize watercourse and pond 2. Grey Sauble Conservation Authority Permits required 3. Additional details to be provided on stormwater management and area drainage 4. Concerns about local ecology, flora and residential wells 5. Impacts of the parking area (salt/petrol) on the watercourse which is part of the headwaters to the Townline Creek.
Traffic	6. Vehicle Access and Pedestrian Access to be reviewed in greater detail 7. 15th Sideroad 'A' does not have the capability to support parking lot traffic without improvements 8. Daylighting triangles required to be dedicated to the County of Grey 9. Residential driveway to be replaced with a commercial entrance to the County Road 10. Cumulative impact of multiple parking lots in the area 11. Existing parking and car traffic at the top of hill is chaotic
Neighbourhood Character	12. The area includes 4.5 acres of parking lots along 1.1km of road. It was also noted that substantial parking (12 acres) has been recently approved at the bottom of the hill (BMR Orchards parking) 13. Area consists of substantial estate residential homes in a rural estate residential area. 14. Official Plan contemplates residential on the subject lands consistent with surrounding residential properties
NEC	15. Niagara Escarpment Plan stipulates that accessory uses (such as a parking area) should be located on the same lot as the main use. An EIS is required to evaluate area significant woodlands and species at risk. Appropriate setbacks are required from the watercourse and pond features.

In response to the issues raised through the public meeting process, Scenic Caves prepared the following documents:

1. Scoped Environmental Impact Study, Hensel Design Group Inc. April 11, 2018
2. Transportation Review, CC Tatham & Associates Ltd. April 6, 2018
3. Stormwater Management Letter Report, CC Tatham & Associates Ltd. April 11, 2018
4. Landscape Plan (Drawings LP-1 and LD-1), Envision Tatham April 3, 2018

Based on the conclusions and recommendations of these studies revisions were made to the Site Plan. These studies, reports and drawings were then made available to those who participated in the initial January Public Meeting. In response, adjacent property owners (property owners living directly in between the new Blue Mountain Resorts parking area and the proposed Scenic Caves parking area) requested additional time to review the submitted materials in greater detail and to provide a response. Planning Staff indicated that the project would not move forward to Council for a decision until their review was completed.

In July 2018 the agent on behalf of the adjacent property owners submitted a peer review of the Environmental and Engineering materials requesting additional information and offering a second opinion on the impacts of the proposed parking area:

1. Peer Review of Environmental Impact Study, Tarandus Associates Ltd. June 26, 2018
2. Peer Review of Stormwater Quality and Quantity and Groundwater Quality, GSS Engineering Consultants Ltd. July 2018

Scenic Caves responded to the questions/concerns raised through the Peer Reviews in August 2018. The responses provided additional information and opinions on the comments received through the original peer review process.

The consultants of the adjacent property owners provided a second response in September and October 2018 which appears to refine the concerns and issues related to the engineering design to an appropriate stormwater design and protection of the existing private well water supply. The Environmental concerns appear to be at a stalemate in terms of potential impacts on and protection of the Significant Wildlife Habitat and Species at Risk.

Planning Staff has requested additional information on the design criteria for the proposed stormwater management design to ensure the highest level of protection as detailed through the Peer Review and Response process. On November 1, 2018 CC Tatham has prepared letter to be considered through the Site Plan Approval process to include these protections. Planning Staff has not requested additional information regarding the Environmental issues as there does not appear to be any additional information that can be provided to resolve the concerns. Planning Staff has contacted the Niagara Escarpment Commission for a formal response as the requirement for an Environmental Impact Study was identified by the NEC early in the process and Town Planning Staff have not yet received any follow up from the NEC office.

In addition to the detailed review of the Environmental and Engineering Issues, Town Staff examined the opportunity for Scenic Caves and Blue Mountain Resort to share the new Parking Area currently under construction by Blue Mountain Resorts. A meeting was held between Scenic Caves, Blue Mountain Resorts and the Town in July 2018. The meeting sought to find a shared solution to the parking needs of both businesses. Although there was significant

cooperation between all parties and agreement that the shared parking could occur, a permanent solution for shared parking could not be found. Both Blue Mountain Resorts and Scenic Caves indicated that at present the shared parking lot would work, however both businesses recognize that they are growing and adapting to a variable tourist market and could not predict their future needs for parking. It was concluded that a shared parking area could work on the short term, however in the long term, both businesses identified that parking was a substantial requirement and want to retain the flexibility for future growth and be able to respond immediately to those demands. The results of that meeting were shared by email with the adjacent property owners and their agents and the response received was that the shared parking arrangement should be a permanent solution and that simply deferring the construction of a second parking lot by a few years does not resolve the concerns. It is the understanding of Planning Staff that both Scenic Caves and the adjacent property owners are looking for a decision of Council on the suitability of a parking lot on the subject lands.

D. Analysis

At this time, Planning Staff are presenting this report for information purposes. Staff will provide a more detailed report including additional information on a Niagara Escarpment Commission response and planning analysis and recommendations for Council to consider on November 19, 2018.

E. The Blue Mountains Strategic Plan

Goal #1: Create Opportunities for Sustainability

Objective #1 Retain Existing Business

Objective #2 Attract New Business

Objective #3 Promote a Diversified Economy

Objective #5 Improved Visibility and Local Identity

Goal #2: Engage Our Communities & Partners

Objective #1 Improve External Communication with our Constituents

Objective #3 Strengthen Partnerships

Goal #3: Support Healthy Lifestyles

Objective #1 Promote the Town as a Healthy Community

Objective #3 Manage Growth and Promote Smart Growth

Objective #4 Commit to Sustainability

F. Environmental Impacts

Opinions on environmental impacts differ. Comments from the Niagara Escarpment Commission have been requested to weigh in on the environmental issues.

G. Financial Impact

Nil

H. In consultation with

Nathan Westendorp, Director of Planning and Development Services.

Shawn Everitt, Interim Chief Administrative Officer

I. Public Engagement

The topic of this Staff Report has been the subject of a Public Meeting and/or a Public Information Centre which took place on January 29, 2018. Those who provided comments at the Public Meeting and/or Public Information Centre, including anyone who has asked to receive notice regarding this matter, have been provided notice of this Staff Report.

J. Attached

Nil

Respectfully submitted,

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