



NEWS FROM COUNCIL

SPECIAL EDITION - APRIL 2018

To the residents of North Hatley and people in surrounding communities interested in our recreational program,

As you may have heard, last week the North Hatley Recreation Society (NHRS) announced that it has decided not to run its summer program this year for the first time in many years. Their announcement has caused some residents of our village and of the surrounding communities some concern and confusion about what NHRS's cessation of activities will mean for them. The municipality would therefore like to bring some perspective on the situation and to assure you that there WILL be a summer program at our public beach this year for all who wish to participate.

Before we go further, the municipality would like to express its appreciation for all the volunteers in our communities who have, over many decades, worked tirelessly to carry out NHRS's mission of providing high quality recreational activities at an affordable cost. Thanks to the dedication of these volunteers, who have generously invested innumerable hours of their valuable time without remuneration of any kind, North Hatley residents and those of neighbouring communities have been able to benefit over the years from the excellent program of recreational activities offered by NHRS.

North Hatley's council and administration have always worked hand-in-hand with NHRS to make the summer program the success it has been. The municipality has always provided the physical location rent-free (beach property and tennis courts), has maintained the properties using its own resources at no charge to NHRS, and has provided substantial financial assistance to NHRS in the form of an annual grant for operation of the program.

Clarification regarding the management of the beach and its activities ...

As the owner of the building and grounds at the municipal beach, the municipality recognizes that the primary responsibility for management of our public beach falls to us. The municipality has the ultimate responsibility to provide good management and a safe environment for our beach. For many years we were fortunate to have a partnership with a volunteer organization that provided our recreational activities and which we supported financially and administratively.

However in the last few years as demands for more regulation grew, the municipality found it increasingly more difficult to keep the finances and management responsibilities of the village and NHRS clearly defined. The municipality must now ensure that activities at the beach are conducted in a safe and secure environment in conformity with current laws and regulations.

In 2017, acting on the advice of the municipality's insurance providers, Council and our administration decided to set up an "entente", a written agreement to clarify the responsibilities of the two parties (NHRS and the municipality) on an annual basis. After some negotiation, the first ever written agreement between our two organizations was signed.

During the 2017 season of activities, a number of issues arose which the municipality wished to address for the following season (2018). These included the following:

- We wished to provide our citizens with improved beach access by increasing the hours of supervised operation to 8 or 9 pm (rather than 5:30 pm in 2016) and opening the beach from mid June until Labour Day (depending upon availability of lifeguards). This would provide up to 77 hours of supervised bathing per week.
- Extended hours at the beach would allow residents better access, but after hours we needed to ensure that the beach premises were securely locked when the property was not under supervision, especially given that the beach is recognized as a designated public bathing place and is in a residential neighbourhood.
- For swimming lessons, (usually a small group of participants) a small registration fee should be charged, allowing this activity to be self-financing.
- Council wanted to give our residents free access to their beach, particularly since our citizens bear a heavier tax burden than most. We note that Ayer's Cliff beach has free access. The municipality welcomes non-residents to our beach, but since their municipalities are not contributing to North Hatley's recreational facilities, we think they should assume a more realistic portion of the annual costs incurred by North Hatley in running the summer program.

North Hatley taxpayers are carrying the major part of funding for memberships:

- Based on information received from NHRS, we have estimated that the average annual actual operating cost to NHRS for one beach family membership is \$258.
- Last year (2017) North Hatley members (45 families) paid \$120
- In 2017 non-resident members (61 families) paid \$200.

The balance for both North Hatley and non-resident memberships came from a grant from North Hatley.

A draft agreement containing these new additions to the entente was presented to the directors of NHRS on the 28th of February. NHRS was unwilling to accept the new terms and proposed rate structure, so the municipality put together a second proposal on April 10th in which the municipality offered to take charge of the beach, providing supervision of the beach and swimming lessons and assuming the cost of these operations. This would free the NHRS to pursue its tennis and sailing activities and relieve its administrators of the financial and administrative burden they felt would be imposed by the terms of the Feb 28 proposal.

The municipality really felt that this was a fair and equitable division of resources for both organizations, but was disappointed once again when NHRS rejected out of hand any part of the new proposal, although they did commend the municipality for proposing to actively engage in the operation of the summer program and agreed to continue to work with the municipality where possible. However, with the agreement unsigned, the NHRS thus had no mandate to proceed. They subsequently declared that they would cease their beachfront operation.

In the wake of these events, the municipality is now committed to organizing the summer program so that we can offer a similar summer beach experience to that which NHRS has provided through the years.

To put a stop to certain rumours circulating, we would like to reassure the citizens of North Hatley that there are no plans to privatize lands or to hand over any part of the public beach to a private company. Our municipal administration has many years of experience in recreational management and is now preparing to take over the management of operations and activities at the beach. The municipal administration and the beach manager are currently making preparations for the upcoming summer season. The village is hiring qualified personnel, giving priority to team members from the previous year. Rest assured that membership in the beach program this summer will be at least on a par with the service provided by NHRS. Meanwhile, we thank you for your patience and understanding during this period of transition.

And finally, following a number of questions that have been asked by citizens, Council would like to reassure citizens that it has no plans to privatize land or to allow the construction of condominiums in the public ball park.

Council is well aware that North Hatley is endowed with exceptional qualities that make life here special, and we are doing our very best to make the most of our beautiful village. We will continue to work to take care of and preserve its greatest assets, including its public parks.

The members of Council and the directors of the administration of the municipality are always available to answer any of your questions or to provide you with further clarification. We ask you to contact any Council member, our Mayor Mike Page, or our administrative head M. Daniel Décaré with any concern you have.

Respectfully,

The Council of North Hatley