

THE MUNICIPALITY OF LAMBTON SHORES

Report DCS 04-2022

Council Meeting Date: December 22, 2021

TO: Mayor Weber and Members of Council
FROM: Steve McAuley, Chief Administrative Officer
RE: Port Franks Dredging

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report DCS 04-2022 regarding Port Franks Dredging be received.

SUMMARY

This report presents a summary of planned dredging activity in Port Franks for the 2022 season.

BACKGROUND

Council passed the following resolution to be considered during budget deliberations:

THAT staff bring forward a plan and budget for dredging in Port Franks to 2022 budget deliberations. Carried

2021 proved to be a challenging year for the boaters navigating the Port Franks river mouth. A few circumstances conspired to make channel maintenance difficult, and at times nearly impossible.

The Municipality performs channel maintenance in both Port Franks and Grand Bend through a contract with a local contractor. The contract requires the contractor to maintain the channel through prop washing, install and maintain navigational buoys, and provide chart depth readings to the Marina Manager. The contract also requires the contractor to provide the necessary equipment and vessel in order to achieve this, but it does also allow for the use of the Municipally owned vessel known as the Northside. In Port Franks, the contractor typically uses the Northside to complete the required work, while his vessel, known as Mitoi is docked and used for maintenance in Grand Bend.

It is important for Council to understand that the maintenance of these river channels is a service provided at the pleasure of Council. Both rivers are considered natural watercourses, as such there is absolutely no legal or statutory requirement on the Municipality's part to undertake any maintenance on the river. Having said that, Council has clearly indicated through past budgets that have been approved over the years that this is a service that they feel is important to provide for both the residents and the visitors to Lambton Shores.

If we turn our attention to the issues experienced in Port Franks in 2022, we can attribute them to two major factors. The first centered around the availability of the Northside. On a three year basis the Northside is required to undergo a complete, out of water, inspection and certification. Unfortunately, when the vessel was removed for inspection in the fall of 2020 a number of deficiencies were identified. Some of them were related to simple wear and tear, while others were items identified as deficiencies by the inspector that had never in previous inspections been noted. The most notable issue identified was the requirement to replace the screw (propeller). While normally not a big issue, one must remember this boat was fabricated in the 1940's so replacement parts are not readily available. In the case of the screw, a direct match could not be found, so a standard size screw had to be ordered and a bushing made and installed on the shaft, which allowed a standard sized screw to fit the shaft. In addition to this, a new diesel powered firefighting pump was required to be installed. This was a new item that was never before identified as a requirement.

The result of this certification work was that the Northside was not available for the 2021 season. This situation resulted in the contractor having to bring his vessel from Grand Bend to work on the channel in Port Franks. While the contractor was willing, and required to do this, it caused some delays in being able to react to changing conditions. The Mitoi is not as big as the Northside, as such it was not as capable of dealing with the sand accumulation as the Northside. In the fall of 2021, the Northside was able to be put back into service and is now fully operational.

Aside from equipment issues, the second factor was attributed to the high Lake Huron water levels continuing to cause issues with the channel. Storms that blow in from the Northwest wash over Chicken Island and fill the channel with sand. Unfortunately these storms are unpredictable and can undo whatever prop washing has been done in a matter of hours.

Many questions have been raised by the public about additional dredging in the river mouth in Port Franks. Dredging by barge and excavator in Port Franks is typically confined to areas around the slips and around the boat launch in the Port Franks Marina. While it is true that excavators sitting on land were used in the fall of 2020 to try to open up the mouth, this was done as a result of fears of major ice jamming. It is not clear if this work made any major improvements, as large amounts of ice did not form over the winter, so no issues were noted during spring break-up.

At this point, staff have no intention of using a barge and excavator to dredge the river mouth proper. The cost of this type of dredging is very high and the risk of a storm depositing sand in the mouth effectively rendering the work useless is just too high. As an example, it would not be out of the realm of possibility that \$75,000 could be spent dredging for a few days, only to have a storm sweep in a week later and render all the work useless and the money spent lost overnight.

At this point, staff is confident that with the Northside back in operation and ready to start work at the start of the season, and with the ability to respond to storms quickly, the mouth will be able to be kept open to a reasonable degree. In an attempt to help boaters navigate an admittedly narrow channel additional buoys will be deployed to help

mark the edges of the channel. Normal dredging will take place around the marina as required.

ALTERNATIVES TO CONSIDER

Council could add money to the 2022 budget for additional dredging in the mouth of the river in Port Franks, however determining the correct amount would be difficult. Staff is not recommending any additional funds from what is already in the 2022 budget.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

This report is presented for information. Staff is not recommending any changes to the current maintenance plan for the Port Franks Marina and river mouth.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The 2022 budget includes \$130,000 for dredging. This is an increase of \$40,000 to recognize what was spent in 2021. In 2021 a total of \$73,000 was spent in just the dredging around the marina, with approximately \$60,000 spent on the contracted services.

In addition to this, \$35,000 was spent on lifting services and recertification of the Northside. Additional buoys were donated to the Municipality through the generosity of a local resident who works for a recycling company that received shipment of buoys from the Federal Government for recycling. These buoys are quite adequate for our needs and allow us to place more in the channel.

As in past budgets, Lambton Shores always carries \$50,000 for general harbour maintenance that can be used if required. Typically, this money is only used for exceptional or unexpected circumstances such as the fall dredge in Port Franks

CONSULTATION

Ashley Farr – Director of Community Services