

# The Hamilton Spectator

## Grey Highlands buys second public access to Lake Eugenia

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By M.T. Fernandes, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter The Flesherton Advance  
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Up to \$50,000 for the purchase will be taken from the Parkland Reserve.

But how much of a "park" the area will be caused some debate.

Mayor Paul McQueen said that his idea was simply that the narrow strip would provide another public way into the lake.

### WAY TO THE WATER

Lake Eugenia is ringed by private cottages, and complaints from neighbours of the public access points about over-use came to council during COVID shutdowns.

That led in 2021 to the municipality not renewing its lease for the two accesses, and OPG preparing to sell them.

The municipality did keep up its lease at the Eugenia boat launch and swimming area.

But some who had used the other access points for decades were ready to fight on behalf of non-lakefront residents after they discovered the plans.

Council later expressed interest in both Sideroad 30 and Point Road, but one access – Sideroad 30 – was sold to neighbours. Late last year, council directed staff to purchase the Point Road access.

### PUBLIC & PRIVATE

Eugenia resident Akky Mansikka said from the outset that it's upsetting seeing natural areas cut off from the public.

"What a surprise to suddenly be confronted by a no trespassing sign blocking the entrance to our access point for the last 50 years," she said in an email to The Advance in June of 2021.

Her concern was shared later by many individuals who entered into the discussion, as well as the Plantt's Point Property Owners Association.

In answer to concerns at the time about over-use and littering, she wrote in an email to the Advance in 2021 that she, like many, carry bags with them when they use the sites, because it's in their best interest to keep them clean. Hearing of concerns, some residents had offered to do a weekly "sweep" of the area, she said at the time.

### FUTURE USE

Still, the lack of guidelines for future use of the land struck Coun. Dan Wickens, who joined the mayor in voting against the motion.

“We have absolutely no plan – I mean nothing,” he said. “Where are people going to park?”

He said he was torn – knowing how the area has been used by residents in the past, but also thinking about what future heavy use might bring.

Coun. Paul Allen suggested getting people together to discuss how the land could be used and monitored. He said he may bring a motion forward in the future related to that idea.

A couple members of council alluded to perhaps limiting use, but Deputy Mayor Dane Nielsen said he wouldn't support using public money unless the end use was for all the public.

Andy Ormsby spoke in open forum to oppose the purchase and public use of the access, saying council should have a plan for garbage, washrooms and parking first.

His property on Point Road adjoins the land, and he has been involved in the issue for some time, sparked by nuisances. At one point he was a prospective purchaser of the property.

A July, 2023 decision allowed the splitting and sale to adjacent landowners of the Side Road 30 accesses on the south side of the Lake Eugenia.

But the lot adjustment on the north side at Point Road was turned down.

At the time, Coun. Paul Allen recommended the municipality consider buy the access in the future. Coun. Nadia Dubyk also supported having a public access across the lake from the beach.

(This decision was made by the Committee of Adjustment, a separate body from council which has members from the public and from council.)

Another transaction at the lake was a land swap with OPG which saw the Municipality obtain Sideroad 30 north of MacDonald Road, and OPG obtain the corridor east of 230/233 Pellisier Street in exchange.