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## 'Glampground' on Eugenia Lake moves one step closer to development



BY SOUTHGREY.CA STAFF — A local Grey Highlands landowner is one step closer to the development of a 'glampground' on the northern shores of Eugenia Lake. Nirav Ghandi's application to rezone his property to allow for a campground/resort was approved by Grey Highlands Council in a close 4-3 vote on March 20.

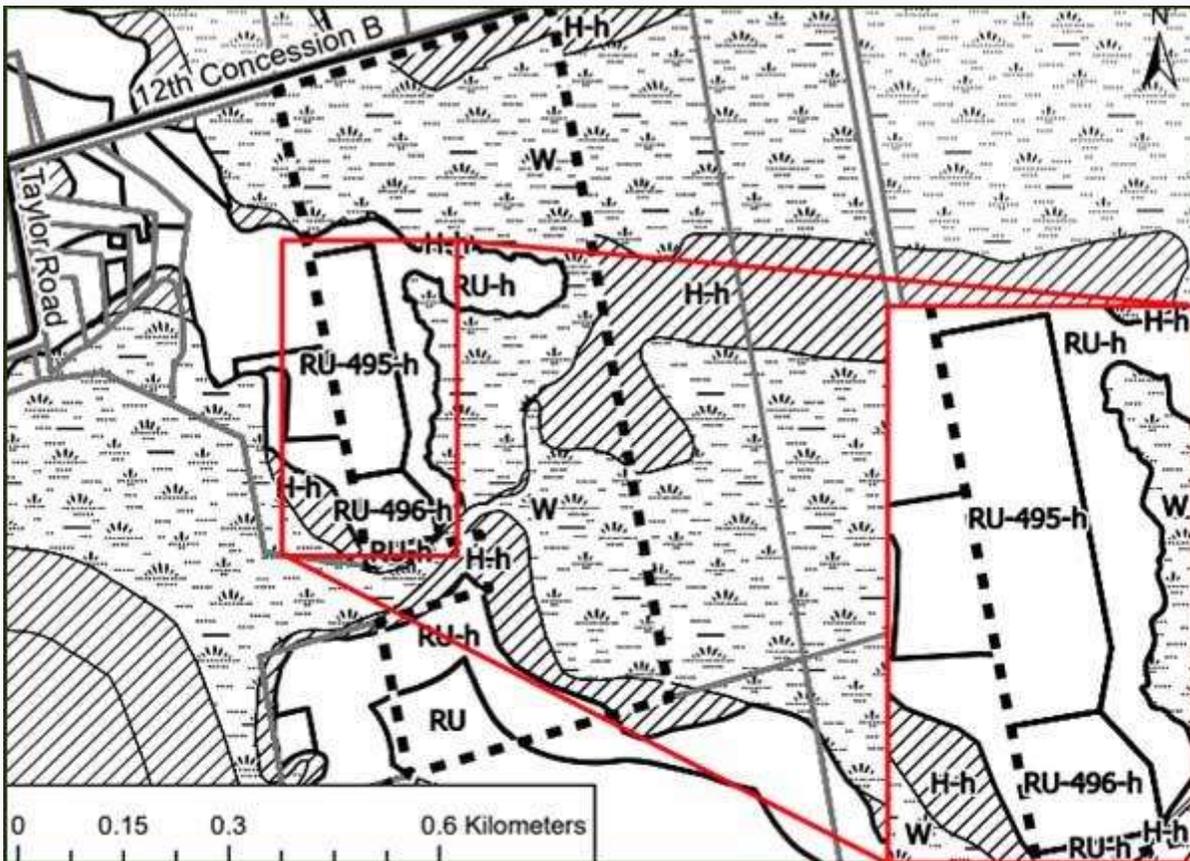
The Ghandi proposal would create 10 small, serviced short-term-rental cottages in a woodland setting at the north end of the lake. The units would share a septic system.

The application had to overcome many concerns expressed by members of the public and Councillors alike, including a presumed increase in noise levels, road and boat traffic as well as the environmental impact and trespassing liability that the development might incur.

According to a Grey Highlands staff report written by Matt Rapke, Manager of Planning for the municipality, "the Ghandi proposal has either sufficiently addressed these concerns, or is minor enough in nature to not warrant significant concern in relation to certain issues."

The report went on to say that while the subject land includes wetland, a suitable setback from the protected area would not result in a negative impact to the wetland or

its ecological functions. "Generally speaking this ends up being a firm minimum of 15 metres in most circumstances as per the direction from the Conservation Authority. In this scenario, all of the buildings will be at least 30 metres away, with most being further," said Rapke when asked to clarify the rules regarding the sensitive land.



As part of the Gandhi application, the applicant had to complete an environmental study which identified the true boundaries of the wetland. "The ground-truthed mapping that (the owners) completed actually resulted in the mapped wetland becoming larger," explained Rapke.

Some of those opposed to the application also expressed concern over the capacity of the lake to accept added usage. In response, Rapke explained, "There is insufficient direction in the Official Plan to require an individual proponent to perform a carrying capacity study for the lake, nor would that be a reasonable request for any single proponent even if the Plan included such direction."

The rezoning approval comes several years after the Hawthorn Cottage Resort was forced by the municipality to close their campground on the opposite side of the same lake. Rapke voiced that the circumstances were different. "The Official Plan designation on the Hawthorn property does not permit 'Resource-based Recreation' uses. According to Rapke, it is designated 'Inland Lakes and Shoreline', while the Gandhi property is designated 'Rural.'"

If the successful attempt to develop a campground on Eugenia Lake might sound encouraging for similar operations, news of the Gandhi application approval came as cold comfort to Hawthorn Resort owners Brian and Jayne LeGree, who have been waiting for a rezoning decision on their re-submitted application since June, 2022.

Denied their application to keep their existing 13 campsites in 2018, the LeGrees appealed the municipal ruling to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) but subsequently lost the appeal. The couple applied again in 2022, to amend the municipal bylaw regarding campgrounds at their location. Although their application was received by Council, it was deferred pending the submission and acceptance of a Servicing Options Study for review and approval by the County of Grey and the Municipality of Grey Highlands.

"(The municipality) have put us through eight years of financial loss, grief and now the fast-passing of (the Ghandi) campground," said Jayne LeGree. "It's heartbreaking."

The Ghandi proposal will now tackle the next steps toward development which will include a submitted plan with many imposed limitations. Cottages will be confined to 50 square metres in size with a maximum height of 9 metres. They will be limited to one parking space per unit and units cannot be occupied during the months of January or February. The driveway leading to the campsite area may need to be upgraded to accommodate 2 vehicles passing each other in opposite directions or shall include signalization to ensure traffic flow in only one direction at a time.

The preparation of a geotechnical study by a licensed engineer that determines the suitability of the soils for the construction of the seasonal cottages is another requirement placed on the applicant and must be completed before a development permit can be issued.

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