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# The Highlander

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**INSIDE: HIGH SCHOOL AWARDS PAGE 10**

**FREE**



## SERVING UP SCARES

Chris Anderson and Misty Zaranik showcase some of the scares that will be served up at Abbey Gardens' haunted wagon ride event, taking place Oct. 29 and 30. See the story on page 22. *Photo By Mike Baker.*

## Couple seeks answers after dogs killed

By Sam Gillett

A Dysart couple is reeling after a beloved hound and her three-month-old puppy were shot and killed.

On the evening of Oct. 21, Lacey Finch and Justin Hutchison's eight-year-old hound, Hunter, and her puppy, Nova, trotted into the bush behind their house as they did every night. They were always let out to go to the bathroom before eating dinner and cuddling in the living room with Finch and Hutchison.

But Finch said, "I called and called and called and they didn't come back." Finch said she then heard two shotgun blasts from the forest.

"We didn't hear yelling, we didn't hear barking; nothing."

Hutchison said he figured it was unsafe to go into the forest which borders their backyard because of the gunshots, however, he went to a property on the other side of the forest where it seemed like the gunshots had come from. They said a person on the property denied hearing gunshots.

After a sleepless night, the couple called the police.

Hutchison later found the dogs' bodies covered with sticks on the adjacent property, their collars removed.

He called the Haliburton Highlands OPP, and an officer attended the scene. According to an OPP press release on Oct. 27, the incident is under investigation but the individual responsible has not been identified.

Hutchison has since buried Hunter and

Continued 'Police' on page 7

## New shoreline draft a 'landmark'

By Sam Gillett

The County of Haliburton has a new draft shoreline preservation bylaw to consider.

At an Oct. 27 meeting, council received its consultant's draft bylaw and voted to hold a special meeting to discuss it, and chart the next step towards passing a final bylaw.

The new draft bylaw comes after nearly five months of community consultation, stakeholder interviews and two sets of surveys and virtual town hall meetings.

"This is a landmark thing within Haliburton County," said Minden Hills Mayor Brent Devolin. Council is now

tasked with discussing the draft and may make changes before it is voted on.

"Regardless of what we decide, it's not going to make everybody happy," Devolin added.

J.L Richards (JLR) and Hutchinson Environmental Services Ltd. (HESL) recommend keeping the shoreline buffer at 30-metres in any future shoreline preservation bylaw.

HESL's scientific review suggests that will remove up to 85 per cent of pollutants, 85 per cent of sediment and 75 per cent of nitrogen from entering lakes.

The draft bylaw allows "minor landscaping" which includes the creation of gardens, maintenance and replacement of pathways and driveways up to five-metres wide, and beaches, as well as the removal of topsoil and up to 25 per cent of trees distributed throughout the shoreline.

It would also strengthen the existing tree preservation bylaw by requiring permit approval "to any future tree removal or site alteration in the shoreline buffer zone selected by County Council."

It prohibits removing native vegetation

Continued 'Process' on page 2

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# Highlander news

## Police won't tolerate vigilante response

Continued from page 1

Nova on their property together, along with the puppy's favourite toy and blanket.

"I'm scared. I'm exhausted. I'm beyond sad for my dogs. They were more than dogs to me, they were my whole life," Finch said.

Finch described Hunter as "the most gentle dog ever," who was more like a child than animal. The dog had her own Instagram account "househoundhunter," where videos and pictures show Hunter posing with other dogs, cuddling on boats, wagging her tail while playing in the snow, and, most recently, keeping a careful eye on Nova.

"You can see how much she was loved, and what her personality was like from her pictures."

Finch said they were excited to bring Hunter hunting with Nova, to show the puppy how to help. "It was going to be Nova's first time at the camp this year. Her first time following her mom and her dad."

The couple said they appreciated the outpouring of phone calls, text messages and online comments of support they've received since posting about the incident.

"We're not out there for a hate crime, we're out there to prevent this from happening to someone else." They urge people to remain calm and let the police conduct their investigation without interference.

Finch has started a hashtag, #JUSTICEFORHUNTERANDNOVA.

"No matter what happens in the sense of justice, they're not going to bring back the



Lacey Finch and Justin Hutchison say Hunter, an eight-year-old hound, and Nova, her puppy, were found dead on an adjacent property. *Submitted.*

two things we want." Hutchison said. "We don't feel safe [being near] someone who is capable of doing that."

Finch said justice also means ensuring this doesn't happen to more families.

"We want to make people aware you just can't shoot a dog when it comes on your property: you need to follow the correct steps." Finch said if they had been called or

notified their dogs were trespassing, they would have immediately come to get them. Each dog had a tag and collar.

"I want people to know how much I loved them," said Finch. "I won't forget them, they weren't just dogs."

The OPP said police are aware of social media posts by other individuals discussing the matter, but cautioned that the person

responsible for the shooting has not been identified. "The Haliburton Highlands detachment will be investigating any incidents that appear to be in response to this shooting," the press release states.

The OPP requests anyone with information to call 1-888-310-1122 or contact Crime Stoppers to remain anonymous at 1-800-222-8477 (TIPS).

## COUNTY NEWS

### Paramedic services master plan

Increasing calls for paramedic service and steady population growth mean it's time for a paramedic master plan, said County council.

At a committee of the whole meeting Oct 13, Council voted in favour of posting a request for proposals (RFP) for an external review and development of a master plan, estimated to cost \$100,000. The plan would outline future ambulance requirements, patient transfer services and supervision and management structures.

"What we're looking to do is develop a fairly comprehensive master plan," said chief Tim Waite, who said the service has seen "significant" growth in call volumes.

The master plan is likely to account for the next 10 years or more of estimated population projections and identify service gaps that may be highlighted as the community changes.

"We've all seen a shift and a change in our community, without that new master plan we don't know where we're going," said Dysart mayor Andrea Roberts.

Some uncertainty lies in tracking where Haliburton residents go to receive service. Algonquin Highlands mayor Carol Moffatt mentioned she's noticed many residents

go to Huntsville; by tracking location, she said, the plan could explore ways to make service more efficient.

"There are areas where the closest hospital may not be a Haliburton County hospital," she said.

CAO Mike Rutter agreed: "It might look at something where they're looking at other municipalities to determine where the most suitable location might be," he said.

A plan would also help the County foresee cost increases associated with expanding its emergency response system, as costs are expected to rise alongside Haliburton's population.

### Winter hiking festival returns

The Hike Haliburton Festival: Winter Edition will return for its second year after a COVID-19 hiatus.

County councilors voted to proceed with the event, which is tentatively planned for the first week of February 2022.

In its first iteration in 2020, 300 hikers took part in 20 guided snowshoe hikes around the County.

Rutter said the event is easy to host within COVID-19 guidelines, as it's administered virtually and each hike can have a capacity limit. He also said 83 per cent of

participants in the event's first edition were Haliburton residents or seasonal residents.

"It certainly did increase economic activities," he said, pointing to how the festival draws people into towns and villages where the hikes are based.

"It's a very low expense and a high return," said Minden Hills mayor Brent Devolin. The festival is estimated to cost the County approximately \$3,000 to host.

### Community climate action plan

Stakeholders from the County's business community, energy and development sectors, conservation authorities and public health organizations will be invited to apply for a spot consulting County staff as they develop a community climate action plan.

Climate change coordinator Korey McKay explained how assembling the advisory group is the next step in a multi-year process of developing a plan to reduce the County's emissions.

Next, staff will help develop a public consultation plan, which is expected to roll out in the spring of 2022.

A draft climate action plan is due to council in the fall or winter of 2022, with a final plan expected in 2023.

In 2019, McKay reported the Highlands

emitted 299,522 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e and consumed 4,966,466 Gigajoules of energy, at an expenditure of \$161,694,699. This is equivalent to 7.6 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e per person, at an expenditure of \$4,085 annually in energy costs.

As climate change models suggest, Haliburton is expected to see more days above 30 degrees Celsius, and less below -30 degrees with a 4.4 degree annual temperature rise.

It's expected applications for interested stakeholders will be open in November, with a list of recommended stakeholders brought to council for approval in December.

### Service improvements

The County will spend \$725,000 from the province's Municipal Modernization Fund on an operational review, and multiple online service renovations.

The funds will help cover the remaining balance of a recently completed service delivery review, a \$100,000 fuel card lock system, and financial software systems estimated to cost \$154,299.

That also includes \$100,000 for electronic records management, \$25,000 for security at public works yards, and \$240,500 for facility renovations at 11 and 12 Newcastle St. ((News compiled by Sam Gillett.)