

**County of Wetaskiwin
Area Structure Plan
Expansion of RV facilities at
Pigeon Lake Golf Club
SE and SW 14-47-28-4**

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1 Introduction

The Pigeon Lake Golf Club is one of the oldest businesses in Mulhurst. The Dowler family started it more than 50 years ago with 18 holes, a pro shop, and restaurant. The owners later diversified the business by building serviced sites for recreational vehicle parking, using tree covered areas south and east of the first fairway. Currently there are 145 RV sites in three clusters. Almost all the clients rent by the season, and leave their RVs on site all year.

In 1991 the Dowlers sold the land and business to Louis Bull Tribe of Maskwacis. After successfully operating the course for thirty years, the current owners plan to grow the RV business. Over the years the proposed development will double the number of sites available, bringing the total up to about 300.

This area structure plan (ASP) addresses the site conditions, servicing, and the impact on the neighbourhood, and must be approved by the County before any development can proceed.

Map 1 shows the location, and Map 2 is a recent air photograph of the property.

2 Municipal policies

An ASP must take into account several municipal policy documents.

Intermunicipal development plans:

The golf course property is over 1600 metres from the Leduc County boundary, so the Wetaskiwin-Leduc IDP does not apply.

The County and the Summer Villages of Argentia Beach, Golden Days, and Silver Beach have recently adopted an intermunicipal development plan (IDP) which sets out policies for development in this area. Map 3 shows that the golf club property is inside the IDP area.

The IDP's Map 2 shows the future land use concept for the area. The unsubdivided remainder of SW 14, the present golf course, is shown as a parks and recreation area. The eleven acres in NW 14, also owned by the golf club, is shown as future residential.

The IDP's Map A5 shows the golf course as "government of Alberta merged wetland inventory". This appears to be based on a small scale map in the provincial Geo-Discover web site, which shows almost the entire quarter section, including grass fairways and upland tree cover, as wetland. In the writer's professional opinion the GeoDiscover map is so generalized that it has no value for detailed planning such as an ASP, and should be ignored.

Municipal development plan:

The County's municipal development plan (MDP) says very little about recreation. However, the County has approved at least nine golf courses (Black Bull, Dorchester Ranch, Loons, Montgomery Glen, Triple Creek, Pipestone Links, Raven Meadows, The Wicked Witch, and Willow Greens). Many of these have expanded or plan to expand into RV parks with County approval. This indicates that RV parks are welcome as a useful addition to the County's tax base.

Pigeon Lake Area Concept Plan:

Because it is in the Pigeon Lake watershed, development at the golf course is subject to the Pigeon Lake Area Concept Plan (ACP), adopted by the County in 2014. The ACP strongly encourages recreational development. To quote section 5.3:

The oil and gas industry in this part of Alberta has matured, and older facilities and lines are being taken out of service. It is likely that the oil and gas industry will pay less in taxes in future. The County needs to replace this revenue. Residential and recreational development is one of the most promising sources, and Pigeon Lake is the most promising location. This concept plan therefore supports sustainable residential and recreational development in the Pigeon Lake watershed, provided that this development is consistent with a healthy environment that will help support a good economic outlook for the region.

This support for recreational development is subject to two guiding principles to protect the quality of water in Pigeon Lake. First, development should minimize the loss of tree cover. Second, development must have an acceptable sewage treatment system so that Pigeon Lake's water quality is not affected. These points are addressed in sections 12 and 15 of this ASP.

Pigeon Lake Watershed Management Plan:

The main intent of the 2018 Pigeon Lake Watershed Management Plan is to protect the quality of water in the lake. This means handling sewage in a responsible manner.

Like the rest of Mulhurst, the golf club is served by the North East Pigeon Lake Regional Services Commission, which collects sewage from all of Mulhurst, treats it in a multi-stage lagoon, and discharges the treated effluent out of the watershed.

Land use bylaw:

The main golf course parcel is currently zoned Recreational. Golf courses and RV parks are discretionary uses in that district.

The eleven acres north of the golf course is currently Country Residential, which is not compatible with the proposed use of that parcel.

The lot containing the Cedar Crest restaurant is now zoned Urban Commercial, and no change is required.

The two lots south of the Cedar Crest, containing the club house and associated buildings, are now zoned Urban Residential, which is not compatible with the actual use.

The three lots facing Lake Drive north of the Cedar Crest are zoned Urban Residential, which is not compatible with the proposed new use.

Zoning changes are addressed in section 19 of this ASP.

3 Intermunicipal issues

As required by the IDP noted above, copies of this ASP **will be** sent to the Summer Villages of Argentia Beach, Golden Days, and Silver Beach with a request for comments. **Those comments will be noted in the final draft** of the ASP before it is submitted to the County.

4 Senior government policies

Although land use is a municipal responsibility, the County must also consider regulations established by the provincial and federal governments.

Sour oil and gas: A proposal to build or use overnight accommodation within 1,500 metres of any sour gas well or pipeline must be referred to the Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) for comments.

There are no sour oil or gas installations within 1,500 metres of the property. The closest is a gas pipeline in SE 18-47-27-4, 3900 metres to the east of the golf course in the Bonnie Glen field

Sweet oil and gas: AER rules and the Provincial Subdivision and Development Regulation restrict development within 100 metres of an operating or suspended sweet oil or gas well, and on the right-of-way of a sweet oil or gas pipeline.

There are no wells or hydrocarbon pipelines on or within 1600 metres of the golf club property. As shown on Map 3, the closest pipeline is a suspended LPG line about 1500 metres north of the golf club property

There are local gas distribution lines in the area, but they do not require any setback under provincial rules.

Abandoned wells: There are no abandoned oil or gas wells on the property. As shown on Map 3, the closest is about 1100 metres away in NW 13-47-28-4.

Sewer lagoons: Food establishments and overnight accommodation must be at least 300 metres from and wastewater treatment plant.

The closest such plant is the facility operated by the Pigeon Lake Regional Services Commission. It is 1200 metres east of the golf course, and is shown on Map 3.

Waste disposal sites: Residences must be at least 300 metres away from an active or closed waste disposal site, and no water wells for human consumption may be drilled within 450 metres of such a site.

There are three closed waste disposal sites in Mulhurst. Section 3.6 of the IDP notes that the required setback from the site in Cameron Highlands has been reduced to 1.5 metres. The other two sites retain the 300/450 metre setbacks. Neither is within 300 metres of the golf course property, and the 450 metre setback does not apply because all RV sites will be served by piped water from wells at least 450 metres from the closed landfills.

Waste is currently handled at a County-operated transfer station in NW 7-47-27-4, about 2560 metres east of the golf course property.

Proximity to highways: A municipality requires the approval of Alberta Transportation (AT) to approve subdivision or development within 1600 metres of a provincial highway. The closest highway is Highway 616, just 800 metres east of the golf course.

In an email from AT's regional office dated 25 May 2021, copied to the County, Cindy Skjaveland (cindy.skjaveland@gov.ab.ca) said that a traffic impact assessment is not required for the proposed development.

Airports: The closest airports are Edmonton International and Wetaskiwin. The closest private strip is in 6-48-26-4, about 4 km east of Wizard Lake.

Transport Canada designates the area as Class C airspace, with no commercial traffic lower than 4600 feet above ground level.

The existing golf course and the proposed expansion will have no effect on flight operations.

Historical resources: The land in question is not on the 2020 Historic Resources Listing published by Alberta Culture. Consequently, no further investigation is required under section H.10 of the Leduc-Wetaskiwin IDP or under section 5.5(j)(A) of the provincial Subdivision and Development Regulations.

Natural environment: A review of Alberta government policies did not reveal any conflict with environmental regulations.

Regional plans: A municipality is bound by a regional plan adopted under the Alberta Land Stewardship Act, but no such plan has been adopted for this part of the province.

In summary, Alberta Transportation is the only senior government department whose approval is required for the proposed development.

5 Neighbouring land uses

Map 4 shows the present zoning of land under County jurisdiction in the Mulhurst area. Land to the north and east of the golf course is generally zoned Country Residential. Land to the south and west, along 50 Avenue, Lake Drive, and the meridian road, are mostly zoned Urban Residential, with a few lots zoned Urban Commercial. There does not appear to be any conflict between the golf course, the present RV sites, and the surrounding land uses.

6 Encumbrances on titles

The eight parcels of land covered by this ASP are shown on Map 5.

The main golf course property, the unsubdivided remainder of SW 14, covers 114 acres. The land title shows twelve encumbrances. Seven are rights-of-way in favour of utilities: one to Fortis, three to ATCO, and three to the County for water and sewer lines. Imperial Oil has one for a water line. The Golf Club also holds a restrictive covenant over adjacent lots, limiting their use to residential. A deferred reserve caveat dated 1980, arising from subdivision RW/79/126, claims 11.14 acres if the land is further subdivided. The County has a 1986 caveat evidencing an agreement for sale for road widening. (The road appears to have been widened in 1989, so that caveat could now be discharged.) Finally there is a mortgage in favour of the ATB.

The second parcel is the unsubdivided remainder of NW 14, containing 11.8 acres. The only encumbrance on the title to the north parcel is a mortgage in favour of the ATB. It is separated from the SW quarter by a six metre wide strip of municipal reserve land. The golf club will negotiate with the County under section 674 of the MGA for the right to build an access road and utility lines across this intervening strip.

The golf club also owns six smaller lots on Lake Drive. Three lots are occupied by the Cedar Crest restaurant, a snack shack, and maintenance and storage buildings. The former club house was demolished in 2019 and will shortly be rebuilt. To the north

are three vacant lots, mostly tree covered. All six titles show caveats evidencing easements in favour of Fortis, ATCO, and the County. The three northern lots have restrictive covenants identical to the one noted above; and instruments described as deferred reserve caveats (but in fact are discharges of a previous DRC). Lot 3 has a financial claim dated 1997, and Lot 4 has an encroachment agreement allowing it to build stairs over a County right of way.

The golf club will discharge to restrictive covenant on the three northern lots.

The remaining encumbrances on title will have no effect on the development proposed in this ASP.

7 Former uses of the land

Historic air photographs do not show any activity that might have contaminated the site or created dangerous conditions for construction or occupation.

At one time the golf club operated a small unregulated garbage dump site on the property, but this has since been cleaned up.

8 Slope and natural drainage

Map 6 shows contours across the site at a one metre vertical interval. The slope is uniformly west and south from a high of 869 metres in the north-east corner of the property to about 854 metres at the club house. There is then a further drop of four metres to Pigeon Lake.

An intermittent watercourse starts at Scott Avenue and runs south across the northerly 11 acre parcel. Once it enters the main golf course area it becomes indistinct and is not shown on NTS mapping. It will nevertheless be taken into account in the layout of the new RV sites.

Because RV sites will not have individual septic fields or soakaways, it was not necessary to conduct percolation tests.

9 Proposed development

The owners plan to increase the number of RV sites from the present 145 to about 300. This will be done by developing new sites on tree-covered land. The fairways will remain unchanged except for a few places where new roads will be required. Map 7 shows the general development concept.

Phase one will see eight to twelve overnight rental sites north of the Cedar Crest.

Phase two will create up to 50 new RV sites for seasonal rental. These will be on tree covered land on the north-west corner of the property between the tenth and eighteenth fairways.

Phase three will create more seasonal rental sites on the eleven acres which the club owns between the present course and Scott Avenue. These sites will be bigger to accommodate larger units, and will be developed slowly over several years. The low land at the west end of this parcel will be left undeveloped.

Phases four and five, which will be delayed for ten years or more, will use currently undeveloped land north and west of the fourth fairway.

The present RV sites are about 15 metres (50 feet) square, and are served by six metre wide roads. This nets out to a density of about fifteen sites per developed acre. The new sites in Phases One and Two will be about the same size. Phase Three will have larger sites for larger RVs, with a net density of about ten per acre. This density is comparable to that found on tree covered land at many other RV parks. For example, the newer part of Whispering Spruce (formerly known as the Dorchester campground) has 50 sites on about five acres, also about ten per acre.

RV sites will not be subdivided and sold, but will be leased. This is the system used at Wood Pines on the west side of Pigeon Lake, Wizard Ridge in Leduc County, Rustic River in Clearwater County, Pine Lake in Red Deer County, and many others. Leases give the management power to enforce standards and good behaviour.

Most leaseholders are expected to leave their units on site permanently. Roads will be maintained year-round, but (because shallow pipes must be blown out prior to freeze-up) water and sewer will only be provided during the frost-free season.

All seasonal rental sites will be on tree covered land and not visible from the adjacent properties. Tree covered buffer strips will be left along Scott Avenue, and north of the lane behind 50 Avenue. The trees between the third fairway and Mulhurst Estates will be left undisturbed.

The County's land use bylaw regulates and requires development permits for such items as additions, decks, and larger storage buildings. These municipal rules will be enforced by the management, and by the terms of the leases.

There are currently a number of units on site which do not meet current standards. They will be allowed to remain, but all new units must conform to municipal and provincial rules.

10 Access to the site

There will be very little movement of RVs in and out of the campground because the sites will be leased, and most units will remain on site permanently. Continuing traffic will mostly consist of light vehicles as owners come and go to and from the RVs parked on their sites.

Most traffic to the site will leave Highway 616 at the four way stop, drive west along 50 Avenue, turn right on to Lake Drive, and enter the property close to the Cedar Crest. A few people coming from the north (Leduc, Edmonton) may prefer to use the meridian road. Both roads are paved.

Map 8 shows that 1372 existing lots in Mulhurst, Silver Beach, and Argentia Beach are accessible only from the four way stop or the meridian road. One hundred and fifty-five new RV sites will therefore increase the number of lots traffic to the site by about eleven per cent. Traffic will increase by less than that, because RV sites generate less than half the traffic volumes as do residences.

As noted in section 4 above, Alberta Transportation takes the view that this increase is acceptable without a formal assessment of the impact on Highway 616.

Section 650 of the Municipal Government Act, and section 3.4.9 of the County's land use bylaw, say that the County may require a developer to "construct or pay for the construction of roads required to give access to the development", which includes any necessary road improvements to handle extra traffic. Any necessary contribution will be negotiated with the County at the time of development. Any such payments should be phased over time as road improvements are required.

11 Internal roads

All traffic will enter the golf club property through the main entrance south of the Cedar Crest. Emergency entrances off Scott Avenue and 50 Avenue will be gated, and will not be used by RV owners.

The entire development will be operated as a single entity, and will not be subdivided, so the internal roads will be designed, constructed, and maintained by the developer. No cost or responsibility will devolve on to the County.

Internal roads will be built to a high enough standard to take emergency vehicles. Widths, curvatures, surfaces, and load-bearing capacity will be negotiated with the County's Director of Public Works, and may be specified in the development permit.

12 Impact on lake water quality

The sewage management system outlined in section 15 will ensure that no effluent contaminates Pigeon Lake.

13 Quiet enjoyment of neighbouring properties

The development will be managed so that it has very little impact on the neighbours.

Buffer strips of mature trees will be left along Scott Avenue, between the third fairway and Mulhurst Estates, and behind the existing residences on 50 Avenue.

The management will set strict rules concerning the conduct of people on site. Among other things fireworks, weapons, and off-road vehicles will not be allowed. The resident manager will be on duty 24/7 to enforce the rules.

14 Water supply

The County of Wetaskiwin operates a municipal water system in Mulhurst, but the golf course is not a customer. The club house, Cedar Crest, club buildings, and RV sites are supplied by wells. This system seems to have pre-dated the present water licence system, because no licence is shown on Alberta Environment's searchable data base.

The golf club will apply for a licence to cover the present and future water usage. To support that application, the owners engaged Envirowest, an independent firm of hydrogeological engineers, to confirm that there is sufficient groundwater to supply the proposed development.

Envirowest estimated water consumption using data provided by Alberta Agriculture. This is typically 12.6 m³ per RV stall per year. The planned 390 stalls (existing plus proposed) are therefore expected to use 4,914 m³ per year or 13.4 m³ per day.

The Alberta Environment water well data base has records of 190 wells in the Mulhurst area. Using the pumping rates from these wells, Envirowest calculated that the existing and proposed development will consume only 2.3% of the long term safe pumping rate.

Envirowest concluded "based on the information reviewed, that the proposed development of 390 stalls would not have significant impact on the local groundwater resources."

Envirowest's full report has been submitted to the County under separate cover.

15 Sewage Treatment

The present development is connected to the regional sewage gathering and treatment system managed by the North East Pigeon Lake Regional Services Commission. The new development will also connect.

The natural slope of the land allows sewage from the entire quarter to flow by gravity into a sanitary main under Lake Drive. From there it is pumped to lagoons in 13-47-28-4 where it is treated before being released into a tributary of Pipestone Creek, outside the Pigeon Lake watershed.

16 Storm water management

Because there is so little hard surfacing, most of the water originating from rainfall or snow melt on the golf course is absorbed into the ground, so there is very little runoff.

Any overland flow is in a south-westerly direction towards the lake. Some of this flow may be diverted into ponds and used for irrigation. The remainder will flow into County ditches along the north and south boundaries of the property, and in the lane parallel to Lake Drive. Because the flow will not enter or damage any natural watercourse, there should be no need to construct storm water ponds.

17 Fire protection

The closest fire station is on the south side of Highway 616, just east of the four way stop, a distance of just under two kilometres. This will provide rapid response.

Fires close to Lake Drive can be fought with water from the hydrants in that road. Fires further back will be fought using water from fire department tankers. These can be refilled from the water main, or from the lake. The golf club is also willing to construct all-weather approaches and dry hydrants at one or more irrigation ponds, if that is deemed necessary by the County's Director of Emergency Services.

The club is prepared to provide some level of fire suppression on site. This will be discussed with the Director of Emergency Services, and might form part of the development agreement.

The operator will also seek and follow the advice of the Director regarding fire safety on site, and compliance with section 10 of the County's Fire Services Bylaw.

To guarantee clear access for fire trucks, parking will not be allowed on any of the internal roads.

18 Waste management

Solid waste from all parts of the operation will be collected by the site operator and hauled to the transfer station south of Bonnie Glen, about four kilometres to the east. Having the operator collect and haul waste will help to ensure that no inappropriate materials are delivered.

19 Zoning

Campsites and RV parks, plus recreational commercial uses such as golf club houses, pro shops, and restaurants are discretionary uses under the present Recreational zoning, so no change of zoning is necessary on the land now occupied by the golf course.

The eleven acres north of the present golf course is currently zoned Country Residential. It will be necessary to rezone this land to Recreational to allow RV sites.

The lot containing the Cedar Crest is now zoned Urban Commercial, under which restaurants are a permitted use, so no rezoning is necessary.

The two lots containing the club maintenance and storage buildings are now zoned Urban Residential. Although the present uses can legally continue without rezoning, Recreational or Urban Commercial zoning would be more appropriate, and would simplify any rebuilding or expansion.

The three lots north of the Cedar Crest are now zoned Urban Residential. This does not allow RV site rental, so the owners will apply for Recreational zoning.

Map 9 shows the present and proposed zoning of these properties.

20 Municipal reserves

Because the land is not proposed to be subdivided, no park or school reserves are due. The existing deferred reserve caveat will remain on title of SW 14, but should be discharge from the titles of the small lots fronting on Lake Drive as discussed in Section 6 above...

21 Public consultation

Summarize, and refer to detailed report in Appendix 1.

22 Timing of development

As previously noted, the owner intends to expand the number of RV sites in stages, with the first stage (eight to twelve overnight rental sites) constructed in 2023. Phase two (about 50 seasonal lease sites) will be constructed over the following five years

The timing of subsequent stages of development (the north eleven acres, and development around the fourth fairway) will be set by market conditions, and governed by the municipal and senior government rules in effect at that time.

The owner recognizes that under its Policy 61.1.6 the County may deem this ASP invalid if development does not start within three years of the date of approval.

23 Conclusion

The development proposed in this ASP is consistent with the County's planning documents, including the MDP, the IDP, and the non-statutory documents which aim to protect the quality of the lake. It will increase and diversify the tax base. It will increase the number of potential clients for local businesses, and it will continue to provide employment for local people. The owners therefore request that this ASP be approved. Once that is done, they will apply for the necessary rezoning and development permits.