

**STONE MILLS**

# Businesses back speedboat race return

*Council advised of various economic spinoffs*

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This year's powerboat races on Beaver Lake in Erinsville may be over but area business owners say their positive impact on the community is clear to see.

That impact has been so great that Tanya Meszaros, the owner of the Lakeview Tavern and Restaurant, approached Stone Mills Township council last week to outline the event's benefits.

"As a sponsor of the races for five years I just felt it was important to rally up the businesses and let you know how much they mean to us, and how important it is," she said, flanked by several fellow business owners.

"We just wanted you to know that the boat races are really important to us as small businesses. It's a struggle for us a lot of times of the year and in the summer time we really rely on the tourists, and events like the boat races, to see us through the slower times."

Meszaros told *the Beaver* that the event has had a major impact on her restaurant.

"When they come it's kind of a common practice for the racers to shop local to where they are. I am a sponsor of the races and I am right on site so for me it's huge," she said. "They come in on Friday and they're spending a lot of money. They camp here and they come back every year."

During the Aug. 7 coun-

cil meeting, Meszaros also presented council with 11 letters of support from local businesses.

"Even though some of the businesses don't profit from the races they still support it because there maybe another event that comes in that will support them," she added. "Basically the gist of all the letters is that we need the boat races and other events to continue for our survival."

One of those letters was from Dalton Cowper, the owner/operator at The Regal Beagle Unleashed and The River Bakery Cafe and Patio.

In his letter, Cowper indicated that many people attending the race also visited his bakery, while a few boarded their pets at the Regal Beagle Unleashed for a second year in a row.

"One of those people has become a regular client and leaves their dog with me every time they travel,"

he said. "That weekend there were so many other events in towns and cities which lured residents and tourists away from our area, that having an event that kept and brought people here was vital."

Throw in a heat wave and an economic downturn, and Cowper argues that events like the Queen's Jubilee, Canada Day celebrations and the powerboat races become even more important to area businesses.

"Although I can sympathize with the lake residents that seek peace and quiet, I fear if we continuously lose events like this we may end up with fewer businesses in the area to support," he added. "A vibrant business community in a rural area like ours clearly has a positive effect on property values, which in turn protects this township's tax base."

**SEE BOATS, PAGE 14**

**BOATS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13**

With talks about the possibility of the Canadian national championships being hosted in Erinsville in the future, Meszaros says the spinoffs could be substantial. "It will bring in approximately three times the racers plus all their families come with them too," she said. "It would have big exposure because it's a Canadian national race and comes with a lot of advertising, so it would be huge."

Stone Mills Reeve Doug Bearance said he thinks it's a great event, even if it makes a little noise for a few days. "The spinoffs and the advantages far outweigh a little noise," he said that night.

Councillor Todd Steele noted that the township did receive some complaints about noise during the first few years the event was run, but that council responded by drafting a Special Events Bylaw. "That was our duty to accommodate those people that didn't necessarily care for boat races," he said. "While it is inconvenient for some, I have no problem going on record saying that I support them. I certainly hope they come back."

While he said he supports the event in the sense that it is good for the community, Councillor John Wise said that there has to be respect for someone who finds something disturbing and noisy. "We have to respect that, that's what a community is all about," he said.

This year's races were held on Beaver Lake on July 21-22 and are organized by the Canadian Boating Federation.