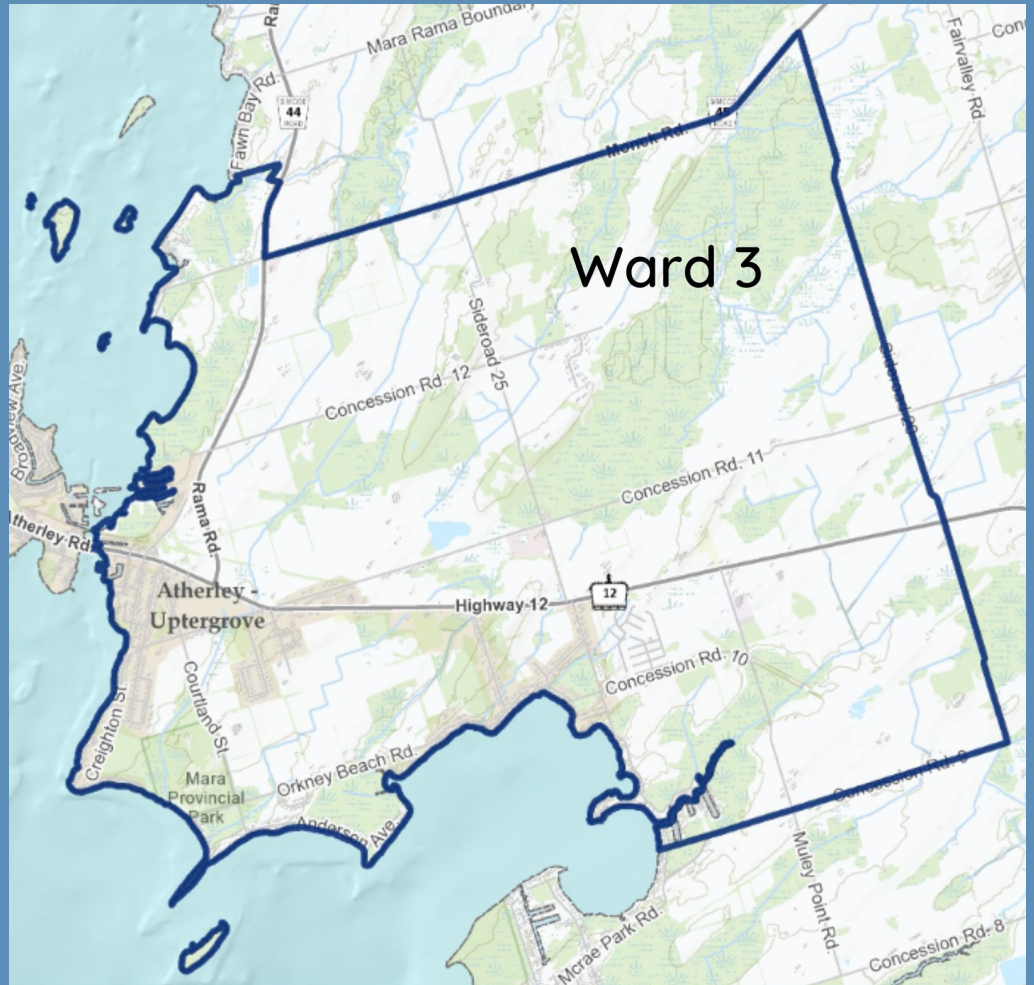


Ward 3 Newsletter

Issue 1 - January 2023



Thank you
for your
confidence
in me.



Dear Community,

It has been a whirlwind so far in learning the ropes for this new role, and as promised, here is a newsletter update of some noteworthy items in Ramara since becoming your councillor. Feel free to forward the newsletter to neighbours who you think may be interested and encourage them to join through the sign-up link:

danatuju.com/newsletter

I will also be posting updates on my [website](#) and on my [Facebook page](#).

Ramara Township Councillor Dana Tuju

dtuju@ramara.ca

danatuju.com

Ramara News

Snowstorm: Wow - we had a couple of days of getting completely snowed in with an accumulation of 3-6 feet of snow, depending on where you live in the township. Combined with County and Provincial road closures due to unsafe conditions, it was very difficult for the plow operators to navigate, and a Significant Weather Event was declared. Thank you so much for your patience during this blizzard, and for understanding that it takes time to deal with such a large amount of snow all at once.

The Atherley: The demolition phase for "The First" Atherley Arms is complete. There were a lot of concerns for the project, but the state of the building was so problematic that it was unhealthy for the land and the adjacent property owners. I have not been informed of any future plans for the now-empty site at this time.



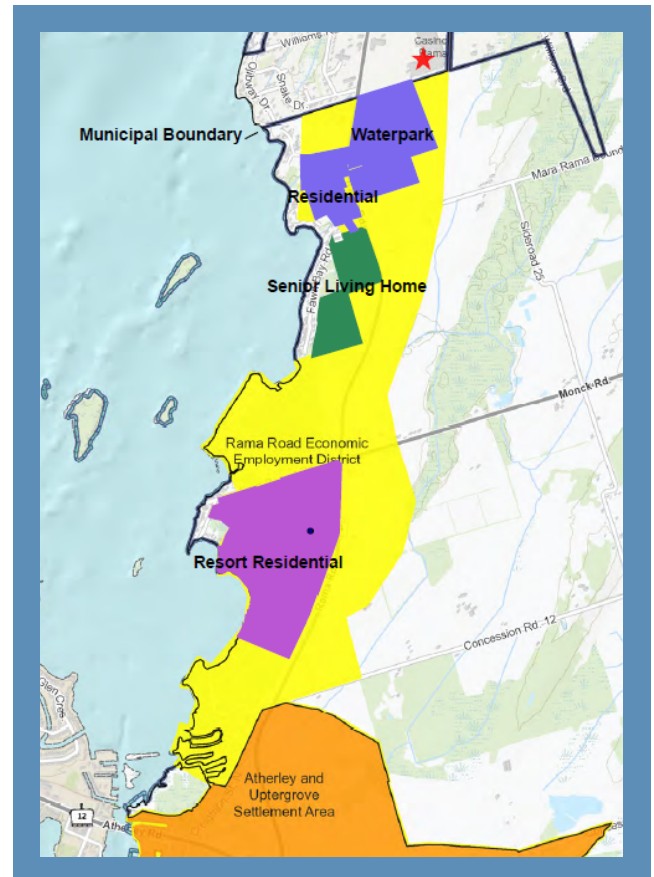
Speed limit reductions: Council recently decided at the October 3, 2022 Committee of the Whole [meeting](#) to reduce the speed limit on Courtland Street between Balsam Road and Orkney Beach Road. This [amendment](#) would reflect the change from the current 50 km / hr to 40 km / hr. Other areas of the township (see all streets and associated speed limits [here](#)) will also reflect an amended bylaw of "60 km / hr unless otherwise posted."

Parking: In that same October 3, 2022 Committee of the Whole [meeting](#), Council made a motion to terminate the paid parking program in Lovely Day Park (see report [here](#)).

MZO in the Rama Road Corridor

Two years ago: An MZO in the Rama Road corridor just south of Rama was requested for 3 large and highly transformative development projects, including a water park.

This request was made on areas of natural heritage and Provincially Significant Wetland on Lake Couchiching, some of which had not yet been properly assessed for the degree of its environmental sensitivity, and its ability to support a large-scale septic solution.



Due to community pushback, the urging of neighbouring municipalities, and concern from Rama First Nation, "... the Township of Ramara and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) agreed that a Minister's Zoning Order (MZO) would not be used in stimulating growth on Rama Road Corridor" ([Ramara media release](#)).

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- February 18, 2021, media release

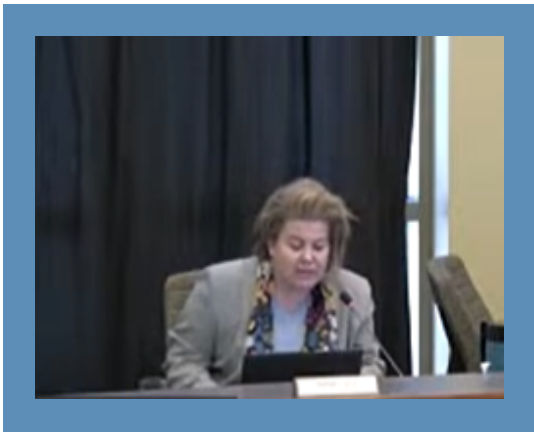
Township officials also wisely announced an intention to commit to avoiding shortcuts and facilitating land use planning processes that [include engagement](#) by Ramara citizens and neighbouring communities.

MZO in the Rama Road Corridor (cont.)

Now: Shortly after new council inauguration, this proposal resurfaced as a [deputation](#) requesting an MZO for one of the development projects in the Rama Road Corridor, located on Willison Sideroad.



However, during the two years between these proposals, it does not appear the developer has commenced or publicly shared a formal process for seeking and integrating community feedback, or results for services, safety, and feasibility assessments PRIOR to once again requesting MZO shortcuts. There were no environmental, social impact, or financial (both affordability and taxpayer implications) assessments provided with this recent deputation.



For those who were concerned about MZOs two years ago, there are still concerns. I gave a [statement](#) regarding that concern at the December 12, 2022 Council meeting, and a list of requests to be addressed PRIOR to approval for this project including, "Could our local seniors even afford to live here?"

For more details about the concerns regarding the original MZO plans from two years ago, please see [this link](#) from Simcoe County Greenbelt Coalition.



What is an MZO? A Ministerial Zoning Order (MZO) offers substantial benefits to developers, such as expediting projects, shortcutting the process of integrating community feedback on land use planning, and granting provincial approval PRIOR to assessment delivery. Due to the significance of these shortcuts on community input, MZOs are intended to be used in very rare, emergency circumstances, for example, to facilitate hospital, school, or public transportation development.

Economic, environmental, and water / wastewater service solution studies are vital in determining the feasibility and safety of highly transformative development projects. Best practices consider these insights PRIOR to zoning approval changes, rather than retrofitting plans after approval, which can lead to serious non-compliance issues down the road.

MZOs are NOT the only pathways for successful development, although they are preferred by developers.



Community engagement in transformational land use planning is fundamental to sustainable and community-driven growth, and should not be sidelined.

The MZO issue is particularly important considering the complications of the removal of municipal oversight of many projects as a result of Bill 23's passing. Council will be voting on this in January, so there is still time, if you would like to make your voice heard.

Bill 23

According to the President of The Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), "Bill 23, as drafted, benefits private interests at the expense of public interests – at the expense of property taxpayers and Ontario's natural environment." You can read AMO's full submission in opposition to Bill 23 [here](#).

Bill 23 is most simply explained in this recent [article](#) for Cottage Life, who further breaks it down in [this article](#) how we would specifically be affected here in cottage country.

Bill 23 negatively impacts Ontarians:



Financially, by offloading the costs of services onto municipalities and their taxpayers



Socially, by removing opportunities for individuals and community groups to raise concerns about development



Locally, by overriding municipal official plans and diminishing protections offered by conservation authorities, putting access to local waterways and community trails at risk



Historically, by proposing new rules that would diminish the protection of heritage properties



Environmentally, by eroding standards that limit flooding & protect source water, wetlands, parklands, and natural areas.

It would specifically pressure lower-tier municipalities that lack dedicated and experienced land use planning staff to expand settlement boundaries onto vital farmland, public & private greenspace, and natural habitat, or into places where they already struggle to be serviced effectively.

At the Dec. 12, 2022 Council meeting, I reiterated the need for Ramara to submit our own letter opposing Bill 23, based on AMO's very comprehensive submission (you can view my request [here](#)).

Climate Action Committee:

I have received many requests to get a climate action committee off the ground. There is a lot of traction for this in neighbouring municipalities, and if you would like to get involved, please let me know.



I believe that every decision Council makes should be viewed through the lens of,

**"How will this affect our water, our natural heritage,
our community, and climate change?"**

Stay informed and be heard!

The [Ramara website](#) is a great resource for any township information you might need, including the [meeting portal](#) for the agendas and minutes. You can select a date in the calendar to view details of past and upcoming Council and Committee meetings.

If you have questions or concerns regarding any item on the Agenda, please email council@ramara.ca. It is a good idea to also cc your Councillor, and any members of [Council](#) you specifically want to reach.

Please include the Meeting Date in the Subject line. Ensure that your email includes the following:

- Item Number;
- Your Question;
- Your Name; and
- Your Address.



Calendar

January 16th @ 9:30am: Committee of the Whole

January TBD : Budget Approval Meeting

January 30th @ 7:00pm: Regular Council Meeting

- You can attend in person in Council chambers, or watch via the [Township's YouTube channel](#) from the comfort of your own home, either live, or at a time that is convenient for you!

December 1st - March 1st: **Snowmanathon**

- Every year Ramara township invites individuals and families to participate in our annual "Snow Creations" building contest.
- Simply build your creation and send us a picture to recreation@ramara.ca and we'll show it off on our socials.

The pictures will be compiled and judged by a panel of experts. Contest begins December 1st and runs until March 1st. With all the snow we got all at once, I am sure there is some fantastic snowman-building going on!



Please note that by sending your entry you are agreeing that they can be shared publicly. No other details than the name you provide will be released.

I hope everyone is staying safe and warm this holiday season.

Is there anything in this newsletter that you'd like to discuss in further detail? **Please reach out** - I look forward to hearing your thoughts!

Happy
New Year