



Indian Lake Borough

Office of the Mayor

Spring 2019

Indian Lake Lot Owners and Residents:

With the snow melted and what appear to be increasingly warmer temperatures, I suspect that all are looking forward to a hopefully drier summer season this year. There have been a number of developments that I would like to share so that all are informed and we can have an enjoyable but safe summer season. As it has been some time since I have published a newsletter, there is a lot to report so I apologize in advance for the length!

TAXES

Thanks to the hard work of the Borough Council and the Finance Committee, which is chaired by Bob Hanson, the Borough was able to not only retire an additional portion of our dam remediation debt, but we were also able to once again reduce taxes without cutting services. This year's budget used a portion of the expanding general fund reserves to retire a portion of our debt while at the same time reducing taxes for a second year in a row. No Borough services are being cut and the Borough will continue to pay down the debt associated with the remediation of the dam at an accelerated rate. I again congratulate the finance committee and the Council for providing tax relief to the property owners of Indian Lake.

BOROUGH NEWS

DESIGNATION OF BOROUGH ROADS FOR ATV/SNOWMOBILE USE

The Council, upon recommendation of a committee chaired by Councilman Shaun Nemeth, passed an ordinance designating the roads within the Borough of Indian Lake as "mixed use" roads as permitted under what is known as the Pennsylvania Snowmobile and All-Terrain Vehicle Law (75 Pa. C.S.A. §7701 *et seq*). Before you head out on the roads with either an ATV or Snowmobile, understand that there are some significant rules for doing so, many of which we inherit from the state law. I will provide the following as a summary only to the relevant requirements.

1. **Authorization does NOT extend to golf carts** or golf course maintenance equipment. Golf carts are not permitted on state or Borough roadways except to cross at 90 degrees.
2. Permitted recreational vehicles are ATVs/UTVs and snowmobiles. Permitted ATVs/UTVs are defined as motorized off-highway vehicles with three or more **off-highway** tires. **This DOES NOT include any motorcycle.** Motorcycles must have a valid PA DOT registration and license plate. Snowmobiles are defined as tracked vehicles that are steered by one or more skis and which have an overall width of 48 inches or less.
3. PA DOT Approved Helmets must be worn by the operator and any passenger of any permitted recreational vehicle operated on any Borough roadway.
4. Operators must be at least 16 and possess a PA or other state driver's license.
5. Permitted recreational vehicles must have a current DCNR registration and the registration certificate must be carried in the vehicle. Additionally, ATVs/UTVs must display a DCNR license plate with a current registration expiration sticker and snowmobiles must have a current DCNR registration and expiration sticker displayed as required by DCNR.
6. Permitted recreational vehicles must have liability insurance coverage issued by an insurance carrier authorized to do business in this Commonwealth. A valid certificate of insurance (insurance card) must be carried on the vehicle at all times of operation on any Borough roadway.

7. Where multiple permitted recreational vehicles are traveling together, operation must be in single file.
8. Where equipped (UTVs), seatbelts must be worn.
9. Permitted recreational vehicles operating on any Borough roadway must follow posted speed limits.
10. Permitted recreational vehicles must have operating and visible headlights and taillights, which must be in use at all times when operating on any Borough roadway.
11. Permitted recreational vehicles must be equipped with a stock muffler.
12. No recreational vehicles (ATVs or Snowmobiles) may be operated on the Peninsula golf course, which is now owned by the Borough.
13. Permitted recreational vehicles may not be operated across a privately-owned driveway that abuts the public roadway – keep it on the road!
14. Snowmobiles may not operate on any roadway that is not snow covered. A road is considered snow covered where the pavement is not visible through the snow cover. Where a Road is NOT snow-covered, a Snowmobile may only operate on the Shoulder or Berm of the Road provided that no portion of the ski or skis is in contact with the paved non-snow-covered portion of the Roadway and that operation does not cross a private driveway.

Ordinance #187 can be found on the Borough website (www.indianlakepa.us). I should point out that while the Ordinance has been passed after much analysis regarding the potential positive and negative impacts experienced by other communities that have passed similar ordinances, we hope that residents will exercise this privilege responsibly to mitigate any potential negative impact. If not, Council is prepared to repeal this Ordinance. While hoped that all will operate recreational vehicles responsibly and in compliance with the Ordinance and state law, to ensure that our roads remain safe, the police department will strictly enforce the provisions of the Borough ordinance and state law requirements relative to the use of recreational vehicles on our roadways. Fines for violations can reach \$1,000.00. Minimum fines for unregistered operation (as an example) are \$300.00. As with all of our enforcement obligations, it is not the desire of any of our police officers to ever have to cite anyone for a violation. To that end we ask that you PLEASE operate in compliance with the state law and Borough ordinance so that this remains a safe and permissible activity for all.

LAKE WAVE HEIGHT SURVEY

In response to property owner concerns about significant wave activity on the lake, the Borough Council established a committee including Mr. Dick Stern and myself to study the issue. With research, we learned that there are a number of factors identified that influence wave height. These include boat speed, boat displacement, hull design, wave mix, dissipation area and the nature of the shore line. Of these, the most significant factor is boat speed. We reviewed a number of studies regarding the problem of wave height. One study, conducted on a lake in Oregon, was particularly detailed and demonstrated the effect of boat speed on wave production. While the other factors identify are certainly relevant, speed is the most significant. The conclusion of that study was to impose a restriction on wake surfing activity; specifically, precluding wake surfing at distances of less than 200' from shore or other boats. This is exactly what the law is in Pennsylvania and I suspect this is news to many of you.

While easy to focus on wake surfing or increased popularity of wake boats, this is not the entire source of our problem. In areas where our lake is narrow, there is little opportunity for waves to dissipate. Additionally, ANY powerboat, especially of the inboard/outboard type (given the weight of the motor in the back) is capable, especially with a number of passengers, of producing a very large wake when operated between 5 and 10 mph.

Beyond what the research told us, we determined that a survey would be appropriate to obtain your input on the perceived severity of this problem and how to address it. The level of participation was amazing and reflects the varied uses of our lake. Over 300 responses were received demonstrating that this is an issue of widespread interest among property owners. While a majority see wave height as a problem, most perceive this problem mainly as a weekend issue with a significant number concluding that this issue is a significant concern on holiday weekends.

Because boat speed is a significant factor relative to wave size, a revision to the boating ordinance was passed last year requiring boats to operate either at speeds greater than 10 mph or slow to no wake speed and move to within 75 feet of the shore or docks (but no less than 40 feet) between the hours of 11:00 am to sunset on weekends and holidays. This was designed to improve traffic flow (get slower moving boats closer to shore) and address the wave height issue.

Nonetheless, the survey indicated that most favor a combination of enforcement and education as an appropriate starting point. To that end, let's start with education. All should be aware of a state law impacting the use of any boat for "wake surfing" activities as well as the change to the boating ordinance noted above. Additionally, by educating boaters as to our enforcement priorities relative to this issue, we hope to mitigate the problem. To that end, the Police will be strictly enforcing the following rules.

1. **Wake surfing (at all times) without the required 200' of separation.** Wake surfing may not be conducted within 200' of any other object or person (swimmers, boats, docks, shoreline) under PA State law. This means that the narrowest parts of the lake, which can be less than 400' wide considering docks in some places (e.g. the northwest finger of the lake in the area commonly referred to as "the narrows"), are not appropriate for wake surfing. Additionally, wake surfing through coves, or on busy weekends where a 200' standoff distance from other boats cannot be maintained, may not be possible.
2. **Passing within 200' of someone engaged in Wake Surfing:** Because wake surfing is usually conducted at slow speed (12-14 mph) and boats engaged in this activity generally travel in a straight line and cannot turn easily, other boats must give way to another boat engaged in wakesurfing if attempting to pass. Therefore, any boat (or JetSki) passing a boat that is engaged in wake surfing, must do so only where a 200' separation distance can be maintained. Where it is not possible to maintain such separation, slow down and wait until there is room to pass.
3. **Slow Speed Operation:** Between the hours of 11:00 am and sunset on weekends and holidays, all boats must operate either above 10 mph and at least 100' from any other object or person (swimmers, boats, docks, shoreline) or slow to no-wake speed and move within seventy-five (75) feet from the shoreline. This will help minimize waves created by slow moving boats.

Please familiarize yourself with these rules as well as all of the operational rules for safe boating on Indian Lake. Those rules are sent with your boat stickers. Be sure to take a moment to read them! The Boating ordinance (Ordinance #184) can be found on the Indian Lake Borough website.

POLICE DEPARTMENT NEWS

NEW EQUIPMENT

The police department, as a participant in the Federal Law Enforcement Surplus (LESO) program, has been able to obtain a number of items of equipment **FOR FREE** as members of this program. So far, and without cost to the taxpayers, we have acquired a 60KW trailer mounted generator as well as multiple diesel heaters for emergency operations, weapons for the police department and a surplus HMMWV, which has been converted for police use.

We appreciate all the help we received from those in the community with getting this vehicle into service not to mention the support of the members of Council. Here are some facts based on concerns expressed in the community thus far:

- The expense associated with converting the HMMWV for police use was funded entirely through donations. The department secured cash donations in excess of \$1,500 to have the vehicle prepped and painted and to have the roof turret removed and covered. Stoystown Auto Wreckers donated a set of seats to replace the very uncomfortable military seats, RPM signs donated most of the vehicle graphics, Team Force donated the lighting package and lake residents Jarrett and Jason Yantus helped with installation of the metal panel to close in the hole created by the roof turret. Paint Township, who disbanded their regional department, donated a police vehicle mounted radio worth several thousand dollars. Chief Bellak took a personal interest in this project and donated much of the labor necessary to get this vehicle ready to be put in service.
- The HMMWV actually gets better fuel mileage than our primary police cruiser (16 mpg) and while it burns diesel, we get diesel at roughly the same price as gasoline.
- The HMMWV costs us nothing extra to insure. Liability is provided under our liability policy without a premium increase and given that we have no capital investment in this vehicle we do not have to carry collision or damage other than collision coverage.
- Maintenance costs are minimal. We have been able to obtain needed parts to include tires through the LESO program.
- Usage: This vehicle has been placed in service and provides us with emergency call-out capability, which allows us to respond when an officer is not on duty much more quickly – not to mention its rough terrain/weather capability. It also serves as a backup when our primary cruiser is out for service.

Finally, through Municibid, the department recently obtained a radar speed trailer at a significant savings from another department. We will deploy this unit at various locations throughout the Borough. It is our hope that this will assist with keeping everyone mindful of their speed. With the onset of nicer weather, many residents take to the roads to walk or bicycle and for that reason, speeding creates an enormous safety concern. We hope that this device will help motorists remain mindful of their speed. Remember that the speed limit in most areas of the Borough is only 30 miles per hour and it is 20 mph in the area of leading up to lodge from either direction. Because of the significant use of our roads by pedestrians and cyclists, speed is strictly enforced throughout the Borough. Do your part and help us keep our roads safe for all!

CRIME WATCH, GUN SAFETY, AND WELLNESS/HOUSE CHECKS

Crime Watch: Chief Bellak continues to run the Indian Lake Crime Watch program and I am happy to report that this program has been extremely helpful in controlling crime throughout the Borough. For those that would like to get involved who have not done so, feel free to contact Chief Bellak via e-mail at police@indianlakepa.us. Thanks to the efforts of Chief Bellak and the assistance of the community, we have had no unsolved burglaries since the introduction of this program.

Gun Safety Course: Based on the success of past programs, Chief Bellak intends to schedule another gun safety course for those of you who legally own firearms and wish to become more familiar with their responsible use. The course includes live fire training and for those that participate, regardless of your level of marksmanship, I can assure that Chief Bellak can provide a tip or two to help you improve. Contact Chief Bellak by e-mail if you are interested in attending an upcoming course by sending an e-mail to police@indianlakepa.us.

House/Property Checks: The police department continues to perform house checks for those homeowners who request this service. Our officers conduct approximately 375 such checks a month. For those requesting this service, an officer will check your property weekly. Each check includes a check of doors/window and evidence of any suspicious activity. If you wish to take advantage of this service, please contact Chief Bellak via e-mail at police@indianlakepa.us and provide your lake property address, the time-period that you wish an officer to check your property and a contact phone number so an officer can reach you if there is an issue. This program is available for any homeowner, and can be requested even if you will be away on vacation for a short period. This program has been extremely effective at not only deterring crime but has identified open doors, prevented a house structure fire, and other issues that had they gone undetected, could have resulted in potential damage. This program is just one more way that the department is demonstrating its commitment to the community.

Wellness Checks: Finally, during severe weather events this winter, and as part of our emergency operations plan, we began performance of wellness checks for any resident living alone or who otherwise needs a visit to ensure that all is okay. Based on the success of this program, we have decided to continue this program year-round. Anyone that wishes to take advantage of this program, either for a specific-period or on an ongoing basis, please contact Chief Bellak via e-mail at police@indianlakepa.us or call the Police non-emergency line at (814)754-3231.

CONTACTING POLICE:

Chief Bellak advises that residents are leaving messages on the department answering machine pertaining to issues for which a 911 call would be appropriate. While these messages now forward to Chief Bellak's department cell phone, if you have an issue where Police should be dispatched (i.e. suspicious activity, traffic complaints, noise complaints, suspicious vehicles, fishing violations, etc.) **please call 911** so that an officer can be dispatched. That said, for non-emergent issues such as scheduling house checks or general questions, it is appropriate to call the non-emergency number for the Police Department at (814) 754-3231. You may also e-mail the Department for non-emergency issues at police@indianlakepa.us. **Again, if you need emergency assistance or need to report suspected or actual criminal activity, please call 911.**

Here is looking forward to warmer temperatures and another safe and enjoyable year here at the lake!

/s/

Michael Miscoe

Mayor, Indian Lake Borough

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