

Aboriginal Housing purchases Gore Bay's Woods Lane Apartments

By **Expositor Staff** December 4, 2019

ESPANOLA – The Sudbury Manitoulin District Services Board (DSB) gave the green light to the sale of the Woods Lane Apartments building in Gore Bay, along with an adjacent vacant lot, to Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services for one dollar apiece, during its November 28 board meeting in Espanola.

“Basically, this organization has more money than we do,” said DSB CAO Fern Dominelli following the board meeting.

The deal has the potential to see a significant leap in housing stock in the community as there are reportedly plans to build up to 30 units on the vacant lot property. The property has been severed by the Manitoulin Planning Board.

“The next step will be an application to rezone the vacant lot,” said Mr. Dominelli, who characterized the move as a win-win for the DSB and the community.

Last May, the DSB had received a report from its property committee recommending the 10-unit (six bachelor and four one-bedroom apartments) Woods Lane apartment complex be placed on the market. At that time, CAO Fern Dominelli had told the board that no expressions of interest for the buildings had been received for either the Gore Bay property or two other DSB properties in Espanola.

The report had indicated that the projected cost of maintaining the Woods Lane units was expected to increase drastically to \$42.39 a square foot by 2023, up from \$1.15 a square foot in 2017.

While the properties have been sold for the sum of one dollar each, there are conditions attached to the sale. In the case of 66 Meredith, Woods Lane Apartments, 30 percent to 50 percent of the units must remain at affordable rents for 20 years and that Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services accepts all current tenants. While the vacant land, which also sold for one dollar will have new construction to begin within three years. The new construction will be a minimum of 30 units, subject to planning bylaws, and 30 to 50 percent of those units will also remain at affordable rents for 20 years.

The Woods Lane Apartments (named after former Gore Bay mayors Marv Woods and John Lane) are Manitoulin Island's original social housing units and were first opened as a Gore Bay Centennial project in 1967.