

Bancroft receiving less property taxes

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By Kristena Schutt-Moore

Many towns and municipalities have pushed back tax installment deadlines, and many have seen a drop in taxes being paid. Bancroft is no different. Town treasurer Bill Davie announced during his monthly presentation to council at the Tuesday, May 12 council meeting that, in comparison to the same period between March 1 and May 12, 2019, in 2020 there was a \$550,000 drop in property taxes paid to the town. Currently, the town has extended the due dates for the May tax installments till the end of June. Council wondered if the extended due dates were part of the reason that fewer people were paying. Mayor Paul Jenkins said he wondered how many people were using the extended due dates because of necessity, compared to those using it just because they could. Davie had no answer for the mayor, though he did say that he was going to start phoning constituents of the town to see what is happening. Davie wants to work with area residents to try to get taxes paid. The goal will not only help the town, but also help residents pay off what they owe. Those interested in talking with Davie about their taxes are asked to call the town office at 613-332-3331. Councillor Wayne Wiggins asked if there were more residential or commercial rate payers that were making use of the extended due dates and/or not paying taxes. Davie said that this was pretty well even across the board. With mortgage payments also changing, the council mentioned at a previous meeting that it was concerned with the property tax being paid through the banks. Davie came back to council stating that the banks will continue to pay the property taxes through the mortgage agreements. Currently the town receives 10 per cent of their tax payments through financial institutions, and Davie currently sees there being no problem with tax payments being made that way. The town staff are keeping an eye on spending and with the \$50,000 contingency fund created in the 2020 budget to help the town during the COVID-19 pandemic Davie says that the town is running close to business as usual. Works and roads manager Perry Kelly agreed and said that the town staff was working towards the construction of Hwy 28 South. The town is currently working with engineers to design a safer roadway at the Hwy 28 intersection at the Shell gas station and Tim Hortons. The town received a \$1,689,918 grant for the work last year. Unfortunately Kelly announced that the town was unable to get similar funding for completing work on Hwy 62 and the main street of town. Kelly believes that that is because they received funding for Hwy 28. Both grants were from the Connecting Link Funding, and Kelly is determined to reply for the repairs on main street in the fall. Kelly hopes that if they get the grant for main street that they can work on curbs, sidewalks, crosswalks, upgrading the traffic lights from the sensor loops under the road to sensors on the poles to improve lighting and traffic flow. The town did receive heritage grant funding of \$6,000 for Canada Day. Davie suggested that the town put the funding towards sprucing up the town with Canada Day banners, flags and signs to support the community and to say thank you to all those serving the community during COVID-19. With the talk turning to Canada Day, Fire Chief Pat Hoover wanted to mention for all those watching the meeting on Zoom or Facebook that the fire ban is still on and until the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry releases it and that fireworks are not allowed to be used as they are incendiary devices and can easily cause grass, brush and forest fires. With COVID-19 regulations and recommendations in mind, the town staff are working to develop a new normal to continue serving area residents.