

Wollaston office prepares to reopen

June 23, 2020

By Kristena Schutt-Moore

Many municipalities are coming up with plans to reopen to the public as COVID-19 restrictions start to relax and change. The municipal staff in Wollaston are currently reorganizing the township office to prepare to have ratepayers in the building once more.

During her clerk's report during the Wollaston Council meeting of Monday, June 15, township clerk Bernice Crocker announced that the staff are looking into ways of ensuring safety for both residents and staff such as glass barriers and reconfiguring the office. This includes looking into ways to get access to the back door to the office functional once again for staff safety.

Crocker asked for council permission to apply for an accessibility fund grant from the federal government to retrofit the washroom, back door and to add a ramp to the door to help ensure accessibility and safety to all members of the public and staff. This will have no effect on the budget because if accepted the federal government will contribute 100 per cent of the cost. Council agreed to the request and Crocker will be applying for the funding as soon as possible.

Crocker also explained that the township has experienced more staff overtime hours than usual due to the pandemic as staff have participated in control groups, time spent sanitizing over regular hours, and isolation time. The township has also had extra costs on items such as hand sanitizer, masks, gloves and additional types of personal protective equipment for the fire department. These costs are compounded with the loss of income to the municipality from items such as hall rentals.

On a brighter note, Crocker announced that she had been in contact with Northern Rural Net, and that even though there were delays caused by COVID-19 and the resulting regulations, the local internet provider is still looking to build five new towers within the Wollaston area. Three of these towers will be on municipal land while the remaining two will be on private property. Although currently, they are roughly eight weeks behind schedule due to delays, NRN is still working on plans for the towers. Another partnership the municipality has is with their engineer of record, Greenview Environmental. Crocker brought to council a suggestion from Greenview that the municipality apply for an asset management project grant to go towards work on stormwater management in the Hamlet of Coe Hill.

In the asset grant Wollaston would be responsible for 10 per cent of the funding, so Crocker suggested that the municipality get a cost estimate for the project. Greenview is suggesting a large stormwater basin under the community park. Crocker asked if the council wanted her to get the estimate from the engineer of record or if she should follow the municipality's procurement policy and get cost estimates from other sources as well.

Councillor Tim Conlin asked that the township put out an ad asked for quotes and to follow the procurement policy. Council agreed with his motion and it was passed. However, Conlin had issues with Greenview's plans.

?I have had issues with this stormwater system right from the start, and I have let Greenview and Tyler [project manager at Greenview Environmental] know about this.? Conlin explained. ?I don't know why we are not just putting a big culvert in there like what is already in there.? Conlin believed that a large culvert would be more feasible and did not like the idea of tearing up the park to place the storm water system under the park. He said that the water would just collect in the storm water basin which would let the water run out slowly and he saw no advantage to that.

?If we went with the culvert we wouldn't need an engineers plan, our roads crew could do it themselves.? Council decided to defer their decision until they were able to have a meeting with Tyler Peters for more information.