

Tudor and Cashel approves roads for Rally of the Tall Pines



By Michael Riley

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

At their meeting on Oct. 5, Tudor and Cashel council voted to approve the Lincoln Electric Rally of the Tall Pines' request, by clerk of the course Ross Wood, to use a portion of Old Hastings Road located within their township for their rally this year. After acknowledging what a great job the rally does each year to organize the event, patronize local businesses, keep residents along the raceway informed and keep the roadways clean, council voted to allow the Rally of the Tall Pines to use that section of Old Hastings Road during their race on Nov. 20.

Wood contacted Nancy Carrol, the clerk and treasurer, in late September to arrange council's permission to use a portion of Old Hastings Road on Nov. 20, from Glanmire Bridge (3.5 kilometres north of Millbridge) to just south of Steenburg Lake Road North at Murphy's Corners, as they have done in previous years. The rally was cancelled last year due to a surge in the number of COVID-19 cases at that time. This year's event will be held Nov. 19 and Nov. 20, and aside from Tudor and Cashel Township, is done through the permission and cooperation of the Town of Bancroft, Hastings Highlands, Limerick, Marmora and Lake, Wollaston, and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry.

Wood told The Bancroft Times that they are very happy to be back and have been receiving lots of positive feedback.

"We have learned a lot about COVID-19 and are planning many changes to assure that we are within provincial and regional guidelines. In fact, we'll be taking measures to assure we go beyond what is required to mitigate risk. The public reaction has been very positive. We are receiving lots of messages indicating that people are looking forward to the return of the rally," he says.

Carrol recommended that council approve the rally's request on the condition that adequate insurance coverage was proven to be in place. She noted in her recommendation in the council agenda package that the township had approved this usage in prior years and that the Roads superintendent, Glenn Hagerman, had no issues with the rally using the road.

In the letter sent to Carrol on Sept. 27, Wood said that the rally had been run successfully from 2004 to 2019 [with 2020 having been cancelled due to COVID-19]. The organizers pay two visits to all residents before the event and contact many of them afterwards, and he says they've had very few complaints over the years. They were requesting permission to make two passes this year from North to South, the road will be open between the two passes, and they will take place in the late afternoon.

To ensure safety during the rally, Wood said they will be controlling access to the road with marshals in radio equipped cars for two and a half hours for each pass, and they can stop the rally and open the road within minutes if there is an emergency. He also assured

the township the rally carries \$5 million in liability insurance and that the township would be named as an insured party prior to the event.

Wood went on to say in the letter that the rally makes a point of supporting local businesses and the residents along the race route.

“For example, we always direct workers and competitors to local gas stations, stores and overnight accommodations. We pride ourselves on developing and maintaining an excellent relationship with the residents on the road,” he says.

With the pandemic still a going concern, dealing with COVID-19 will be a big challenge during the rally, according to Wood. He says that the Canadian Association of Rallysport, the national governing body for car rallies, had worked with rally organizers Canada wide to develop and implement COVID-19 precautions to ensure everyone stays safe. Wood says that the Rally of the Tall Pines committee plans to go beyond the recommended minimum standards for safety when it comes to COVID-19 protocols. Consequently, there will be no spectators allowed; no official spectator points, no spectator program and no VIP program. All meetings have been and will be held virtually, and hand sanitizer and masks will be made available at strategic locations. They will also be monitoring other events leading up to theirs, to make any changes for pandemic safety as necessary.

According to The Rally of the Tall Pines website (tallpinesrally.com), registration is being done remotely this year, and all documentation must be submitted prior to arrival at the rally, and team members will be limited to six. There is also a remote fuel depot during the second stage of the rally. They also encourage fans to download the Tall Pines app (available for Android and IOS), to keep track of the teams on race day.

The Rally of the Tall Pines was first established in 1971 in Bramalea, Ontario, and this year is celebrating its 50th anniversary. Now based in Bancroft Ontario, as it has been for the past 47 years, the Lincoln Electric Rally of the Tall Pines takes place in late November, and challenges drivers with dirt, snow and ice to test their driving abilities to the limit. It has become known as one of the best run rallies in North America, and according to eight-time Rally America champion David Higgins, it is the toughest one-day rally in North America. For the last 14 years, the organizers of the rally have honoured their Green Initiative Program, which donates a portion of the entry fee to the Bancroft Stewardship Council, which manages the local tree and shrub planting program.

At the council meeting on Oct. 5, Mayor Libby Clarke passed the resolution regarding allowing the rally to use the township's portion of Old Hastings Road, and then called for any discussion. Councillor Roy Reeds commended the rally on their operations. This was in contrast to another unsanctioned rally he mentioned that came through the township causing disturbances and leaving a mess. He mentioned he'd be bringing it up at the next Roads meeting to see if they can do something about it, and bring it back to council, saying there should be a policy about it.

When it came to The Rally of the Tall Pines however, Reeds said the way they go about the whole event was really good.

“They look after the roads and if there are any issues, they knock on doors. The way these people with Rally of the Tall Pines run it?...perfect,” he says.

With that comment, Clarke called the vote and council voted unanimously to approve The Rally of the Tall Pines use of Old Hastings Road within the borders of Tudor and Cashel Township on Nov. 20.