

Library CEO is looking for a new home for BPL

By Tony Pearson

Bancroft council finally got to hear some good news last week. It came from the town's library. Library CEO and head librarian Chris Stephenson ? the fourth within less than two years ? reported growth in both acquisitions and circulation. In particular, he noted an influx of DVDs from the closing of Mr. Video. The library now has 1,300; in the near future, he expects to have 3,000 titles available.

In all, the library circulated more than 20,000 items to more than 3,500 active members. Membership grew by around 10 per cent more than the year before. As a sign of the future, more than 100 clients accessed their books electronically (e-books).

Stephenson noted that remotely accessing resources would increase, including in terms of actual books. The library has a program now to deliver books to those who can't leave their homes; a partnership with Meals on Wheels means that books can be delivered along with meals.

Libraries are no longer just books. The library's computers are continuing to be put to extended use, with more than 3,700 hours logged last year. In addition, the library can lend out 'pods' to allow access to the Internet. In another extension of the library concept to new areas, a 'seed library' was set up, where people can take heritage seeds and return them when they have grown a new crop. Stephenson underlined the use of the library building as a community hub. It runs a number of successful interactive programs, including the children's events on Saturdays, author talks, and a knitting club. They also provide tutoring for students, technical skills training, and financial literacy workshops.

One move that Stephenson and the library board feel is essential to truly becoming a community hub is a new location, one far more accessible to everyone, including those with mobility issues. As Stephenson put it, 'We don't ban books, so we don't want to ban people.'

Club 580 is the building the library would like to call home. They have secured financing for strengthening the floors and even for acquiring rolling shelves, so that the building shape can be changed for different purposes. The board has talked to MP Mike Bossio about federal funding to further improve accessibility.

Mayor Bernice Jenkins cautioned that although 580 is a town property, the seniors club must still be consulted and included in any planning for re-shaping the purpose and structure of the building.

Rally contract renewed

Council concluded a contract renewal with the Rally of the Tall Pines. In the new two-year agreement, the rally agreed to pay for any needed road repairs over a cost of \$2,000. The town will cut back its expenditure as the rally will now pick up the cost of portable toilets and area tents. In addition, works manager Perry Kelly reported that he had asked the rally for money to repair damage done last year to the Dungannon ball diamond; the ball field will not be used by rally vehicles at this year's event.

Perry reported on a potentially expensive repair to the town's bucket truck. An attempt to save on boom inspection costs by sending the truck to Ottawa led to demands for large sums to repair the bucket and boom. By the time the truck was rescued and returned to Bancroft, the cost had risen to more than \$20,000. However, the town mechanic was able to finish the job for about \$1,000.

Kelly pointed out the low purchase price (\$15,000) for the normally extremely expensive unit meant that even with the repairs, the truck remained a bargain, one likely to serve the town for years to come. All future testing will be done at the town works department.

New homes and habitats

Chief building officer Dale Shannick brought more good news when he reported that 17 new homes were built in Bancroft last year, with three more in for approval so far this year.

Further to the issue of new homes, Habitat for Humanity executive director Bob Clute came to council to request permission to put up three new homes at the intersection of Billa Street and Bridge Street, where they built their original house some years ago.

Habitat homes allow people who ordinarily couldn't afford a home of their own to acquire one. The labour is supplied by the new family and by community volunteers, with fundraising covering specialist expenses like electrical and plumbing work. The contribution of \$25,000 from McDougall Insurance was gratefully acknowledged.

Clute explained that because of the length of the planning approval process, construction of two houses won't begin until 2018.

On another planning matter, council and staff agreed that size does matter, when they turned down a request for an oversized sign at the Fairway Boulevard plaza (by the Petro-Canada station, beside the Canadian Tire store).