

Clark Lake boat launch still not settled

By Jim Eadie

Bancroft town council was called to a special meeting on March 28 to sort out several pressing issues, and to conduct an open session public meeting required by the Planning Act. The purpose of the open session was to gather information from citizens of the municipality regarding a proposed bylaw to prohibit boat launching from the current municipal land on Clark Lake at the second intake zone.

Mayor Paul Jenkins told the approximately 20 people in attendance that the purpose of the meeting was for council to meet with them, to hear and receive the information they wished to provide on the matter.

“We received four written submissions in opposition to the proposed bylaw,” said Robin Tait, planning co-ordinator. “We also received two that supported but had comments.” Copies of written submissions were attached to Tait's written report.

Tait presented the staff recommendation that a bylaw be enacted protecting the municipal water source (Clark Lake) by prohibiting the use of a public boat launch in property owned by the town “Source Water Protection ? Second Intake Zone (SWP-2)”. The proposed bylaw would define “public boat launch” as a designated area of public land adjacent to a waterbody or watercourse that is used to launch and remove watercrafts from the water. “Watercraft” is defined as any vehicle or vessel designed to move across or through water. The by-law would only prohibit boat launching of watercraft from the municipally owned property where currently there is an unmaintained trail into the water sometimes used to launch boats. The primary object of the legislation is to prevent the introduction of zebra mussels into the water source.

Several people made presentations opposing the bylaw, questioning the need for the measure and complaining that people other than landowners would be unfairly denied boat access to the lake. One man noted many people cannot attend a daytime meeting. “This meeting is not really set up for the public,” he said. “A lot of people cannot attend ? that's discrimination.”

“That is why we have written submissions,” said Jenkins.

Brian McRae, member and club services officer of Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters from Peterborough made a lengthy presentation.

“Unnecessarily limiting access does not necessarily prevent zebra mussel,” said McRae. “You must focus on education, signage, and awareness. Exhaust the other resources first ? signs, a boat cleaning facility at the lake, more education.”

Several people also spoke in favour of the proposed bylaw citing their concerns for zebra mussels, and pollution in the drinking water source.

One person in the gallery found his written submission opposing the bylaw had not made its way into the council package and had not been seen by council members.

Following the public forum, Councillor Mary Kavanagh moved to approve the new bylaw, but after a long silence and a lot of looking around the table, no-one would second the motion.

“Then the motion is not on the floor,” said Jenkins.

“I would make a motion that we defer this decision,” said Councillor Barry McGibbon. “We did not get to see all the letters sent to us ? and for further consideration of the information that came forward today.”

In a recorded vote, council agreed to defer their decision until the next meeting of council. Kavanagh voted against the motion. Deputy Mayor Charles Mullett and Councillor Tracey McGibbon were absent.