

Bancroft budget deliberations begin

By Jim Eadie

During the March 28 special meeting, Bancroft council had their first peek at the draft of the 2018 budget drawn up by the municipal staff with directions from council. Treasurer Arthur Smith told council the proposal would result in a 3.66 per cent reduction in property taxes. This complies with the direction from council that the 2018 budget reflect a two per cent reduction in expenditures that relied on 2017 property taxation, alongside the anticipated 1.8 per cent increase in property tax assessment.

Individual property tax dollar amounts may increase or decrease in the real world depending on whether the assessment value of the individual's property increased or decreased.

“There will be a public meeting scheduled in late April or early May,” said Mayor Paul Jenkins. “Our budget ad hoc committee has not discussed this information yet.”

Smith offered some highlights from the staff work.

“A good strong asset management plan is extremely critical any more for obtaining government grants,” he said. “Our plan needs to be tightened up.” Almost \$150,000 would be set aside to accomplish that.

Smith noted that the library board has requested a 11 per cent increase in funding to a total of \$127,330.

“It is the recommendation of staff that council apply the same budget restrictions of a two per cent reduction to all of its boards and committees,” he said. “This would restrict amounts approved by the town to \$11,172 excluding the library and the arena.”

Manager of public works Perry Kelly spoke briefly.

“We are trying to be as creative, and we are trying to be vigilant that our roads receive good service within a sustainable budget,” he said. “We have also moved the recycling contract in house, and it has done exceptional service for our ratepayers. The program has been a great test, and eventually the capital investment gave a 100 per cent return.”

Smith returned to the theme of long term asset management planning. “It is holding us back,” he said.

Jenkins thanked staff for all of their work and noted the council budget committee will now get to work on the fine details.

“The only hard and fast thing in this proposal is the end number,” he said.