

Limerick Township council discusses McGeachie Trail maintenance

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Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Limerick Township public works supervisor Darren Naulls sought the advice of the township council on Dec. 21 at the monthly council meeting about services and costs provided by the township to maintain McGeachie Trails. While they had done a considerable amount of work to maintain it in 2020 both in terms of services and staff hours, Naulls wanted to know if council wanted to keep up this maintenance level for 2021 or scale it back. If council wanted the current workload maintained, he wanted to create a budget line for the work to be as transparent as possible and to receive approval from council for expenditures and services. The council, headed by Mayor Carl Stefanski, approved the expenditure of no more than \$4,500 yearly going forward to maintain the maintenance of the parking area with grass cutting, snow plowing and garbage removal, directed staff to create an agreement between the township and Hastings Destination Trails Inc. for work provided and liabilities, and that any additional work requested must go through the township's clerk, Victoria Tisdale.

Donated by the McGeachie family in 1994, McGeachie Conservation Area, located on approximately 500 acres on Steenburg Lake, has a variety of topographical features and is home to a plethora of wildlife. It also has many well-maintained walking trails, which were refurbished recently with a grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, administered by Hastings Destination Trails Inc., on behalf of the North Hastings Economic Development Committee.

Councillor Jan MacKillican says that the township agreed to help with the initial work to support a tourist attraction in their township.

"The initial work was digging the washroom hole and brushing the entrance. On an ongoing basis, we agreed to cut the grass, snow plowing and garbage removal," she says.

In his staff report to council, Naulls stated that the last time he was given direction by motion or resolution by council in regards to McGeachie was back in November 2019. In this case it was a motion approving public works to do work in McGeachie regarding the brushing of the entrance way, digging and back filling the hole for the new privy style washrooms and snow plowing of the parking lot.

"On top of this work, the public works staff has also changed the garbage, mowed the grass and helped put up wayfinding and destination signs," he said in the report.

Naulls also brought a report of time spent and cost for services in the past year by his public works department. Overall, he estimated 73-man hours and 67 equipment hours for a grand total of \$5,417, based upon an hourly rate for staff at \$26.50, \$80 per hour for equipment, and one load of gravel at \$202.50.

These figures were broken down for council by Naulls in the following way. For the changing of the garbage, he estimated an hour every two weeks with 26-man hours per year for a total of \$689. For the mowing of the grass, he estimated an hour every two weeks, eight-man hours and eight equipment hours for the season for a total of \$852. Snow plowing was based on two plows or one hour a week, 25-man hours and 25 equipment hours for the season totalling \$2662.50. The construction of a new privy style washroom, including digging a hole for the tank and back filling after came out to four-man hours and four equipment hours and one load of gravel totalling \$628.50. The unloading of the privy style washrooms at the municipal garage and storing them indoors plus delivering them to McGeachie came to one-man hour and one equipment hour totalling \$106.50, brushing the entrance into the conservation area came out to three-man hours and three equipment hours for a total of \$319.50 and putting up destination arrows

and signage took six-man hours for a total of \$159.

Mayor Carl Stefanski commented on this issue in an email from Jan. 9, saying that Limerick Township sees the improvement of the McGeachie Trail as a complement to North Hastings economic development and a relief for people to enjoy the outdoors.

?The township has invested labour, equipment and material and has committed to an additional yearly amount of \$4,500 going forward to maintain the parking area with respect to grass cutting snow plowing and refuse removal. This trail system together with others in Hastings County has an amazing support system set up through HDTI. The staff, council and myself invite people to come and enjoy the improvements, especially the new winter programs, but please follow the health guidelines.?