

Bancroft decides to take over town recycling

By Tony Pearson

Bancroft town council has decided to take over the collection and management of its recycling program. It is currently handled by an outside contractor. It made the decision at a closed meeting; last week Greenview Environmental presented the cost figures involved.

The town will spend about \$300,000 to upgrade its waste processing facility so it can handle the recycling. Depending on the prices available for the recycling materials, the net cost of operating the system could run from \$15,000 to \$70,000 a year.

A main reason for the town's move was expectation of a significant increase ? up to 30 per cent - in the price it is charged now. Depending on the amount of the actual increase, Greenview estimates that the town could more than cover its new expenses by saving on contracted services within a period of no more than two to three years.

?Our Mayor and members of council believe that this project is an example of the future of blue box recycling in rural eastern Ontario, and will establish Bancroft as a leader in waste management in northern Hastings County,? Town of Bancroft CAO Hazel Lambe.

Council also returned to its main financial problem, namely the growing sewer deficit. It agreed to press sewage plant operator Ontario Clean Water Agency (OCWA), for more information. It wants to know exactly how much is flowing through the system and where it's coming from, to see if OCWA is doubling charging for any treatment. It also authorized camera work to check for leakage.

After a tug-of-war with staff, council decided that they wanted to continue to receive advice from outside experts, such as those on its wastewater committee. In particular, they want independent advice on how to stop the deficit, and then recover the existing \$2 million debt. Council also wants staff to hire a consulting engineer to prepare specs for new water and wastewater facilities operation and management. This could be in preparation for the town ending its OCWA contract and taking over the water and wastewater systems itself, as it has just done with recycling.

A new water issue surfaced with concerns over Clark Lake. Lambe identified protection measures which could keep the lake, the source of all the town's drinking water, free from motorized craft. Although the town owns the lake's shoreline and can ban access to motor boats, there is some concern that this ban could be breached. The town will apply to Transport Canada for a designation of 'restricted lake', which would toughen the ban. Councillor Mary Kavanagh is looking for even more restrictions, such as bans on washing cars or horses, so that the purity of town water is assured.

Lambe also recommended that Bancroft Community Transit (BCT) be treated the same as private taxis, and plans to suggest a new by-law setting terms and conditions for operating fee-charging transit. This could set requirements for drivers, limits on charges, and licence fees payable to the town. The new by-law would also cover Uber-style taxi operations.

BCT manager Gwen Coish expressed concern at the proposal. She plans to make a separate presentation to council, outlining BCT's differences from commercial taxis.

Council also learned from the Bancroft Business Improvement Area that it wants to withdraw from involvement in the annual and very popular Wheels, Water and Wings festival. It has organized the event for some years. The BBIA plans to reorganize Wheels, Water and Wings as a whole to maximize its fundraising potential including redeveloping its management strategy.

With respect to the Faraday quarry question, Bancroft has expressed to Hastings County its concerns about increased use of its roads by heavy equipment. The town also inquired about a county economic analysis of the project, including the impact on surrounding land values. However, the county has no plans to conduct such an analysis.

Council heard from two summer students, Nicole Soames and Kaitlyn Simpson, who have been investigating measures to reduce local crime, especially by young people. They recommended that after an inventory of local social service programs, as well as a concurrent assessment of program needs, the town should contact the John Howard society about bringing in some of their outreach and rehab programs. Programs such as the anti-theft program, the drug and alcohol awareness program, the family support program, and the use of sentencing circles as court alternatives. Their report will go to the Community Safety committee, whose consultant, Dr. Hugh Russell, noted Australian success with restorative justice processes.

The next challenge for council is at the weekend conference of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, where they will lobby provincial government representatives on a number of on-going issues, including more borrowing power for the sewer debt, a roll-back of the 400 per cent increase in the rent for the works yard, support for the Earth Science Centre project, and more financial support for infrastructure upgrades.