

Bancroft faces council vacancy

By Kaitlin Sylvester

The resignation of Councillor Barry McGibbon has necessitated a critical decision for the Bancroft Council, regarding the filling of the vacant seat. Effective March 31, the seat has been officially declared vacant, invoking the council's duty to consider the available options for reinstating representation. The Municipal Act, 2001 mandates that the council must declare the seat vacant when a councillor submits their resignation, or if another reason arises. Council must then deliberate on whether it will be filled through a by-election or appointment process. In this instance, the vacancy arose due to a resignation received in writing and duly accepted. To qualify for the role of municipal councillor, individuals must meet specific criteria, including being 18 years of age or older, a Canadian citizen, and a resident, owner, or tenant of land within the Town of Bancroft. Options for filling the vacant seat range from an expedited appointment, one without an application process, to more extensive selection procedures involving applications, interviews, and presentations. Alternatively, council may opt for a by-election, which is a significantly costlier endeavor. It is unlikely the council will opt for a by-election in this situation. Appointments pose minimal costs to the town compared to the substantial expenses associated with organizing a by-election. Ultimately, the council's decision will shape the future trajectory of governance in Bancroft, influencing not only the composition of the council but also the engagement of its citizens in the democratic process. The staff report, released by clerk's Amber Wanamaker, provides clarity on the procedural obligations and avenues available to ensure the continuation of municipal affairs. During the April 10 regular council meeting, Bancroft Mayor Paul Jenkins, addressed McGibbons resignation and wished him well on his future endeavors. "We'd like to acknowledge the many years of service and knowledgeable contributions of Barry, his expertise will be missed but we do wish him the very best and he continues forward." In the coming weeks, council will convene to deliberate on the recommended course of action, weighing the merits of each option against the backdrop of their fiduciary duties and the town's best interests. Whatever decision is reached, it will reflect Bancroft's commitment to transparent, accountable, and inclusive governance, reaffirming the resilience of its democratic institutions in the face of change. During the April 10 meeting, council deliberated on the appropriate course of action, debating the timelines inherent in each method of appointment. Councillor Tracy McGibbons pointed out that both the appointment methods had been used in the past, and that they had the benefit of speed. Jenkins replied that speed was not the priority and instead pointed out that specific expertise was the priority. "We have so many areas that we're getting into in the coming years that we need people with the necessary knowledge whether it be waste management, roads or finance." Council agreed to extend the deadline for the applications to May 13, when they will review the options and decide on next steps. Anyone looking for more information can reach out to info@bancroft.ca