

BCT presents council with plans for Riverside Park building

By Tony Pearson

The following are a series of reports from the meeting of Bancroft Council on Tuesday, April 14.

Last week, Bancroft Community Transit (BCT for short) shared its developing ideas about its new building in Riverside Park with the town council. The sustainable building, put up last summer and fall by students from Fleming College in conjunction with local contractors and suppliers using local materials, has been tentatively named The Heart of the Park. It will contain a fundraising and fitness-building equipment rental service (bikes, canoes, kayaks, paddle boards, skateboards, and eventually winter sports kit); BCT is currently asking for donations of used equipment. The building will also house a recreation hub" which will organize healthy living activities, somewhat standing in for a town Parks and Recreation department. One such activity is already planned for July ? the "York River Paddle Challenge". Races will be open to recreational and beginning paddlers as well as elite ones, and to families as well as competitive teams.

In addition, there will be food services which will not only provide meals and snacks, but training and jobs. BCT will team with Youth in Action to operate a canteen and a "community kitchen", which will be available to community groups, individuals and organizations who require an approved facility for processing local food products as part of nutrition and food-related programs. In these enterprises, young people will receive training and job experience. BCT hopes that local food producers and vendors will get involved in the operation, so that trainees can learn a spectrum of skills, from food handling to food preparation to business management and marketing.

BCT also provided council with figures on its transportation operations. Currently, thirty nine volunteer drivers provide over 20,000 rides a year; they work 365 days a year, and serve about eighteen hundred clients in both the North Hastings area and out of their new satellite office in Belleville ? a nearly threefold growth in just eight years. Clients include people of modest means who need to access health and social services. Now they also include young people who need transport for job training and employment, as well as access to after-school programs and activities. To meet the need, BCT has two vans of its own with paid drivers, and thanks to a Trillium grant, will soon receive a third wheelchair accessible van.

To meet community needs, BCT is partnered with over two dozen community partners, ranging from NH Children's Services to Loyalist College and local sports groups like minor hockey, soccer, and gymnastics.

As manager Gwen Coish put it in the report: "With strong established partnerships, BCT has established connections from Bancroft through Hastings and Renfrew Counties and all the way into Kingston, Peterborough, Toronto and even further. We support almost all existing services.... The resources in our community are vast; BCT just wants to make sure that those who need to access them, can do so."

In discussion with councillors, Coish inquired as to when the picnic shelter will be moved and drains connected; CAO Hazel Lambe promised to work this out with Works Manager Perry Kelly. BCT's Jane Mayberry noted the amount of garbage which accumulates in the park, and how it might increase; she suggested that BCT could install a garbage and recycling station at the canteen with signs like these [UK signs](#) to clearly demonstrate what should go where, an offer Mayor Bernice Jenkins was quick to accept. In discussion, other sources of waste were identified, such as dog waste; councillor Charles Mullet recommended more signs reminding dog owners to pick up after their dogs. Councillor Barry McGibbon saw a need for more garbage bins in the park, as well as more frequent pick-ups. Mayor Jenkins stated that this might entice more cottagers to dump their garbage in the park, and more tourists to clean out their cars.

Finally, BCT and the township will cooperate on a grant application to finance a walkway from Station Street which will make the park fully accessible for those with mobility restrictions.

Membership at the Bancroft Public Library on the rise

In other council matters, Vanessa Holm, manager of the area's public library, along with board member Cathy Archambault, came to last week's meeting of Bancroft Town Council to report growth in both membership and programming. Membership is up 15 per cent over the past few years, Holm stated, as is participation in activities such as the March break program. She announced that 2015 will see more new activities, such as a musical program for babies and tots, as well as an upgrade and new software for all public access computers. The library, which has members from Faraday, Hastings-Highlands, and Carlow-Mayo in addition to Bancroft, has an annual circulation of 24,000 books and videos; electronic loans were up, while book loans showed no decline.

Library management was saluted by councillors Mullet, Kilpatrick, and Kavanagh, as well as Mayor Jenkins. Jenkins noted that the building is definitely too small for its level of use, and Holm also noted that its windows and doors were not energy efficient, leading to high heating costs.

Holm and Archambault presented the budget for 2015. Revenue is expected to be around \$153,000 (\$110,000 from the town of Bancroft), while anticipated expenditures are \$156,000, with the largest amount (nearly \$110,000) going to wages and benefits. Questioned about this budgeted deficit, Holm indicated that by year's end, it is normally in balance (there was an \$80 surplus in 2014); in addition, the library has accumulated surplus funds.

On other items:

- * the town will soon meet with community organizations to review components of its evolving community safety strategy.
- * the fee increases for building permits were approved
- * the date for the Dungannon open town hall meeting was set for the evening of May 19, with the focus on town finances, assets, and taxes.
- * CAO Hazel Lambe is reviewing a planner's formula for a new system of parking levies on businesses.
- * the Business Improvement Association is considering a new office above Life Labs and is also looking at moving the Farmer's Market to the city parking lot behind McCaskies.