

Could Bancroft be getting a junior hockey team?

By **Tony Pearson**

Bancroft council heard last week that a new junior hockey team may be heading to Bancroft. The level is hard to determine. One thing is certain: the team will not be part of the Ontario Hockey Association, or in the Hockey Canada family. The term some people use is that it's a 'rebel' league. This was the title given to the Greater Metro Hockey League (GMHL), which despite its name has teams well outside Toronto.

The GMHL president, Bob Russell, recently announced that this league's Northern division was dropping four teams, including Haliburton and Bobcaygeon. The logical assumption would be that a Bancroft team would take the place of one of these. However, the people investigating Bancroft may be from a new organization called the Canadian Premier Hockey League, which plans to start a 12-team league in September. It's so new that it doesn't even have a website yet, although it does have a Facebook page. Its commissioner, Bryan Elliott, is from Port Colborne. It declares itself a developmental league for higher-tier junior clubs. Whatever league that's making inquiries, Bancroft Councillor Tracy McGibbon, who represents the town on the North Hastings Arena Commission, stated that no commitment has yet been made. However, the arena has drawn up a draft contract that states that games would be played on Saturdays and Sundays.

The Arena Commission minutes state that: 'We need to consider how it will affect our current user groups. It will obviously increase the revenues for ice, dressing rooms, canteen and pro shop. Upgrades to the sound system and booth will be paid by the club, which would benefit all our leagues. Discussion with the user groups followed and hopefully we're all on the same page and can work together to suit everyone's needs.'

On this subject, Councillor Barry McGibbon stated that current minor hockey already puts hundreds of thousands of dollars into the local economy. Tracy noted that the arena is financially self-sustaining, a feat largely unmatched elsewhere.

Council received very good news when it learned that Bancroft will once again host 'Saw Tech Log Expo' this June. The event will feature demonstrations of sawmill and wood processing technology, and show off the latest in woodlot equipment. It will also hold loggers' games, and stage a recruitment fair. In addition, the event will showcase new 'value-added' wood products 'from furniture to popsicle sticks.

The 'Wood Expo' has been to Bancroft before, the last time about five to six years ago, when it attracted thousands of people. Council will consider the request to put money into sponsorship at the next meeting of committee of the whole.

In other business, council deferred a decision on granting a natural gas sales franchise monopoly to Northeast Midstream, who approached council last fall. Councillor Bill Kilpatrick expressed concerns about the environmental damage done by 'fracking,' the process of extracting natural gas from oil fields. Councillor Mary Kavanagh was concerned about the adverse impact on current local energy suppliers.

Council learned that the final draft of the feasibility study on the proposed Earth Sciences Centre will be in next week.

Hardly surprisingly, given a six per cent increase in the costs of the Centennial Manor, council supported a Manitoulin resolution calling on the province to increase its financial support for long-term care facilities.

The CAO reported on results from the town's meetings with provincial officials at the Rural Ontario Municipalities' conference in February; this was reported in the March 4 edition of Bancroft This Week.