

Council bans flying lanterns

By Sarah Sobanski

Flying lanterns are no longer allowed in Hastings Highlands.

Hastings Highlands council passed an amendment to its Open Air Burning bylaw May 5. The amendment sets a \$400 fine for selling, causing or permitting flying lanterns and/or igniting and/or releasing flying lanterns.

Flying lanterns are described as "a small hot air balloon or other device designed to carry an open flame as an airborne light, also known as sky lantern, Chinese Lantern, Kongming Lantern or wish lantern, or other similar device which are devices containing a fuel pack, which fuel pack is usually a petroleum or wax based fuel that when lit causes the lantern to rise."

The fine is the second largest in the bylaw, equal to burning non-wood products and below hindering or obstructing an enforcement officer at \$500. The lanterns were a part of eight additional provincial offences added to the bylaw. All other fines are \$250.

"It allows our bylaw officer more leverage when dealing with folks," said North Hastings Fire Services chief Pat Hoover.

Suzanne Huschilt has been officially appointed as staff's deputy clerk.

Council thanked Huschilt for the work she has been doing for council over the last year and looked forward to her being in the position.

"Council and the rest of staff are pleased that Suzanne Huschilt has been officially appointed as deputy clerk. She's been in that position unofficially for over a year. She does an awesome job in her capacity," said Mayor Vivian Bloom.

Deputy Mayor Gregg Roberts was appointed as council's representative to the Eastern Ontario Trails Association. Councillor Tracy Hagar brought to council's attention that it has been without a representative on the board for the past two years. Councillor Alex Walder will represent council as an alternate if Roberts is unable to attend.

Roberts motioned that council discontinued the use of all elections signs in Hastings Highlands "effective for the 2018 election.

"Why I came up for this is for various reasons. The cost of signs and hardware of \$20 per sign, in the 2014 election. I used 50 signs in the 2014 election, so you're at \$1,000. The time required for construction, maintenance and removal, I used up about 20 to 25 hours "this is my personal experience," said Roberts, also noting sign pollution. "[There's] much less expensive ways to get your message out."

He estimated campaigning in 2018 would double signs costs with rising election fees, "It's getting far too expensive. It could deter someone that would run, they won't run. They look, in my opinion, terrible out there."

Councillor Nancy Matheson suggested the signs would be a larger cost to new people choosing to run in 2018. She also noted that with new at-large voting "chances are you'll have 20 signs together at every major intersection."

Walder asked if Roberts had checked into the legality of the bylaw. He motioned to defer until council could get a legal opinion.

"I understand your points. I'm not saying I agree with them, but also not saying I disagree with them? I think it's a freedom of speech issue," he said.

Council deferred the bylaw so it could seek legal advice.