

County presents draft official plan to Bancroft

By Nate Smelle

Director of planning Justin Harrow presented council with Hastings County's draft official plan at their meeting in Dungannon on Aug. 23. For most of the morning session, Harrow explained to council how the draft official plan defines the future of development in Hastings County. Highlighting the goals, objectives, policies and procedures within the draft official plan, he described in detail how it takes into consideration the social, economic and environmental concerns while promoting improvements to infrastructure, economic growth and conserving natural and cultural resources.

Harrow said that over the next 20 years the county's total permanent and seasonal population is projected to reach 64,600 ? an increase of approximately 5,800 residents. During this time, he said job growth is projected to be slow to steady with the number of residents working from home expected to steadily increase by 32 per cent. According to the draft official plan, Harrow said the employment base is also forecasted to increase from approximately 10,050 in 2018 to 11,200 in 2038. He also noted that the county does not expected to experience employment growth in the industrial sector. North Hastings is projected to observe a 34 per cent increase in employment, while the southern market expects a rise in job growth of 66 per cent.

The County of Hastings will be hosting a series of four public open houses, held at various locations throughout the county, to provide the public with an opportunity to review the draft official plan, ask questions and provide feedback. Harrow indicated that these meetings will not feature a formal presentation, however county staff will be present to answer questions and receive comments from the public. In terms of the timeline for the plan, Harrow said they ?are really hoping to get it through county council by the end of the year, however it will depend on the issues that the public has with regard to the draft of the official plan. If the public comes back with suggested changes and recommendations for negotiations to make changes to some of those policies it could take a while longer.?

The first of the two open houses was held Aug. 28 in Hastings Highlands. The second was held Aug. 30 in L'Amable. For more information regarding the draft official plan the public is encouraged to visit the Hastings County website at www.hastingscounty.com/content/county-official-plan; or by visiting the Hastings County planning and development office at 235 Pinnacle St. in Belleville. Comments regarding the plan can also be submitted via email to OP_review@hastingscounty.com.