

CVCA presents to Faraday council April 6

By Mike Riley Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Faraday Township council heard from Tim Pidduck, the general manager and secretary with the Crowe Valley Conservation Authority at their April 6 meeting. He told them about a transition plan mandated by the Ontario government that had to be completed by Jan. 1, 2024, listing what they and other conservation authorities do into three different categories and stipulating what is mandatory and not mandatory. He explained the process and also informed them that the CVCA needed a six per cent increase over last year, mostly for capital projects that need to be done as soon as possible.

Mayor Dennis Purcell introduced Pidduck and invited him to make his presentation. Pidduck thanked council for having him and said he would be explaining a transition plan that the Ontario government wanted the CVCA and other conservation authorities in the province to undertake by Jan. 1, 2024.

The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks released two regulations on Oct. 1, 2021; Ontario Regulation 686/21 and 687/21. The first regulation outlines the mandatory services and programs that conservation authorities are required to provide and that they can levy municipalities for. It also requires conservation authorities to develop agreements with their member municipalities for any additional services and programs that are not considered mandatory by the MECP. Pidduck says that this will help to make sure that their member municipalities understand both the core and non-core programs and services of the CVCA and the related expenses for said programs. The second regulation requires conservation authorities to transition their services to meet these requirements by Jan. 1, 2024. Pidduck said that initially the conservation authorities thought it would be a fairly quick process but that was not the case, especially with some of the larger conservation authorities who offer more programs (like educational programs, maple syrup festivals, treetop ziplining etc.) that take more time to take into consideration when implementing the transition plan.

?As I mentioned in my presentation, the timeframe is certainly favourable considering the CVCA does not have the same concerns or issues as other conservation authorities in the province. For once, being a small rural conservation authority with very few programs is an advantage, as we will not have many Memorandum of Understanding agreements to undertake. Depending on the review by the municipalities during this consultation and development period for the agreements, the CVCA may not even have to enter into any agreements at all. Simply stated, the vast majority of the programs and services of the CVCA fall under provincially mandated items (primarily category 1 or 2). There is very little outside the scope of core mandated programs and services the CVCA offers,? he says.

Pidduck told The Bancroft Times on Jan. 4 that the transition plan had been approved by the CVCA board, and had been distributed to all their member municipalities by early December. At that time, the inventory of the CVCA's programs and services was going to be distributed to member municipalities by the end of February.

The additional pressure and increase on the administrative workload for staff at the CVCA was a concern to Pidduck for the remaining steps and requirements in the transition plan after the inventory was completed.

?It may become very difficult and challenging in the next two years as the CVCA does not have the extra staff to allocate to this process and required deliverables,? he says.

Pidduck said in his presentation to Faraday that this April 6 meeting was the initial step in the dialogue about the CVCA's inventory and a great opportunity to have an open discussion to review their programs and services.

?In fact, in a communication I had sent out prior to the meeting, I suggested this may also be the best time to review not only the CVCA's services, but to perhaps identify what services our member municipalities would like to have going forward. For example, many of our municipalities might consider access to a GIS technician or a planner would enhance their services, but don't want to

hire for a full-time position. Maybe a position at the CVCA could be shared for the benefit of the CVCA and all of our member municipalities?" he says.

The transition plan lists what the CVCA does and puts that list into three categories, highlighting what is mandatory and what is not. He said he tried to keep it straightforward and easy to understand for anyone reading it, and that he's based it on the CVCA's 2022 budget.

Pidduck says that the presentation to Faraday council was the first he'd done specifically to review the CVCA's inventory.

?At this time, I do not have any further meetings scheduled to discuss this initiative. However, I would imagine I will be addressing more member municipalities in the coming weeks.?

Purcell asked Pidduck what kind of increase the CVCA was looking for this year versus last year's increase, to which Pidduck answered that according to this year's budget, they required a six per cent increase. He explained, following a question from Councillor Carl Tinney that the higher increase was due to some significant capital projects that need to be done sooner rather than later. These include repairs to the Marmora Dam and updates to their out-of-date gauge system that they have in place through out the watershed, which is nearly 35 years old. He said that while it had done well for them so far, they can't really rely on its old equipment and hardware anymore due to its age.

?We're running a risk by not updating this gauge system. We're running a liability risk not being able to deliver on the flood forecasting and warning program and service that we are required to provide to our residents in the entire watershed. Those are the primary two reasons for the increase, so we bit the bullet to update the gauge system and if the provincial funding comes through for the Marmora Dam system, we'll do that too,? he says.

Tinney and the rest of council said they understood the increase after Pidduck's explanation. With no more questions or discussion, Purcell thanked Pidduck for his presentation.

Pidduck thought the presentation was well received, when he emailed The Bancroft Times on April 11, although he thought it fairly quickly reverted to a discussion about the CVCA's 2022 budget.

?Perhaps the direction of the discussion went that way since the inventory, which had previously been circulated in February, not only outlined the programs and services but gave a monetary amount for each section based on the 2022 budget. That being said, council wanted to be assured there would be an open communication channel and any additional questions from council would be addressed,? he says. ?I confirmed I would be more than willing to return to council or answer any future questions through Faraday staff if they so desire.?