

Farmers? Market moving to Millennium Park this Summer

By Tony Pearson

After some discussion, Bancroft Council decided to allow a Farmer's Market in Millennium Park on Fridays this summer. Vendors will operate stalls between the hours of 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.; Friday was chosen to avoid conflict with the Maynooth market, which operates on the weekend. The market in Millennium Park will follow the guidelines of Farmers' Markets Ontario, which emphasise locally-grown produce and local crafts, sold by vendors who are the primary producers of their goods. Meanwhile, the long-standing market at Hastings and Flint will continue from Monday to Saturday under the direction of Switzer's Farm. Deputy Mayor Paul Jenkins expressed scepticism at the idea of two markets in two different locations, and also questioned whether Millennium Park was a good location. In order to review the issue at the end of season, Council decided to put the new market on a trial basis. They also stated that the park would remain available to the public, and that the market would have to make way when other events, such as the Relay for Life, require the full use of the space. In the end, a recorded vote approved the concept, with only Councillor Jenkins opposed. The town will now draft an agreement for the vendors' group to sign; this will include provisions that the group take care of its own insurance, and collect fees for the municipality.

Council also received a proposal which could bring natural gas energy to the area. Joshua Samuel, CEO of Northeast Midstream, explained that his company is building a treatment facility in Thorold which will receive natural gas from Western Canada, and convert it into liquid form. This liquefied natural gas (LNG) would then be shipped by truck to storage facilities in subscribing municipalities, from which it could be piped into area homes.

Mayor Bernice Jenkins stated that she had long raised the question of whether natural gas could be delivered to Bancroft, but had always been told that the installation of a pipeline from Belleville or Madoc was not cost-effective. Samuel said that the use of highway-delivered LNG would allow households to meet their energy needs while saving one to three thousand dollars a year. As for the cost of conversion from propane or oil, he noted the creation of new provincial programs, as well as proposed federal income tax changes, which would support conversion to natural gas and cover its costs. However, Samuel asserted that to take advantage of the new provincial grants, which currently have only a two-year life, Northeast Midstream would need a municipal declaration of support, in the form of an exclusive franchise should development prove feasible, and they would need it by June.

As the only obligation of such an agreement would be to ensure no other natural gas vendors would 'horn in' on Bancroft after Northeast Midstream had carried out and financed all the spade work, this did not seem a major obligation to most council members.

However, Councillor Bill Kilpatrick raised the question of the extent to which the gas would be extracted by the 'fracking' method; Samuel stated that this was the common procedure today. ('Fracking', or hydraulic fracturing, injects high pressure water, sand, and chemicals to force gas and oil out of rock; environmentalists are concerned about the enormous diversion of water for the process, as well as the risk of ground contamination.) Councillor Barry McGibbon wanted to know about the costs of installation, including the extent of disruption to area roads as piping is installed.

Mayor Jenkins will ask staff to investigate further and check with other area municipalities, and bring a recommendation to the June Council meeting.

Another area staff will study is the location of pedestrian crosswalks on Hastings Street. Works Manager Perry Kelly noted that contrary to many people's belief, the existing crosswalks are not 'legal' required stops, but only 'courtesy' stopping zones. Kelly will look at installing better marking. On other matters, Council will also be reviewing its regulations on commercial sign lighting, given advances in LED technology. It will also take a look at imposing commercial assessment for home-based businesses. And it will oppose a change in the name of the Bancroft detachment of the OPP.

Council received two pieces of good financial news. Treasurer Craig Davidson reported that collections for owed back taxes were improving; in recent months, about \$150,000 has been recovered. And fire chief Pat Hoover reported on a new enterprise called Fire Marque, which looks to collect insurance company payables for fire services. For a 30 per cent fee, the money is returned to the local fire department, where it can be used for training, public education, or new equipment. Given that this is done at no cost to the homeowner or the municipality, council agreed to a three year agreement with the company.

Finally, Deputy Mayor Paul Jenkins proposed that the Finance committee also take on the Economic Development mandate. He expressed his desire for the town to more actively link and prioritize town projects with economic growth potential, and aggressively pursue new investment, so as to ease current budget constraints.