

Hastings Highlands snuffs out fireworks bylaw

By Sarah Sobanski

The following are highlights from Hastings Highlands regular council meeting May 30.

Hastings Highlands council has canned its proposed fireworks bylaw.

After months of debate, the bylaw returned to the table but no councillor felt the need to discuss it. Deputy Mayor Gregg Roberts was seated in the gallery after declaring a pecuniary interest ? many customers of his business were against the bylaw.

Mayor Vivian Bloom declared the motion lost.

Delegation promotes idea of area poet laureate

Kathy Figueroa says Hastings Highlands should have a poet laureate.

Figueroa is known in the area for her poetry on all things rural living. She's also currently implementing her poem walk project with stops at 10 Maynooth area businesses.

?I think it'd be great,? she said.

Councillor Alex Walder agreed. He said that with the area branding itself as an arts hub, having a poet laureate would be a ?perfect fit.?

Economic development co-ordinator hired

Hastings Highlands has hired Russel Grant to help implement recommendations of its Business Retention and Expansion, First Impressions Community Exchange and Tourism Brainstorming Workshop research.

According to a release by the municipality, ?Grant brings a wealth of experience as a project leader and process facilitator. One of his key guiding principles is that ?participation breeds commitment.' He is to work with council, municipal staff, business leaders and members of the public to synthesize and identify the most important, realistic and attainable action items to implement in the next 18 months. He is to lead a team of ?economic development champions' who will help to establish both these short-term action items as well as long-term plans that will be a focus over the next three to five years.?

?I'm delighted to take on this role and responsibility and look forward to making a significant contribution,? said Grant.

?I think in looking at the information so far, I would say that the community has some wonderful strengths? It's a very friendly community for everyone that experiences it and I think quality of life is certainly something that people value and appreciate.?

Grant said he'd already compiled recommendations into a spreadsheet to better organize them and he would be ?pragmatic.?

Council asks for report for extra road repairs

Staff will review the costs of North Baptiste Road following a motion from Councillor Nancy Matheson.

The 2.9 kilometre stretch in question is west of the North Baptiste Lake Road landfill. It's not on the municipality's five-year capital roads plan, but Matheson was armed with a letter of support and said there was a petition with more than 50 signatures to fix the road.

?Continuous patching efforts have been undertaken, numerous times, every year, over several years, to no avail due to the decline of the base level,? states Matheson's motion. ?To continue these ongoing repairs, over an additional five-year period could prove to be more costly, and not effective, than if repaired at this time.?

Councillor Dorothy Gerrow and Roberts warned against deviating from the municipality's roads plan. Each said they didn't want to set a precedent of fixing roads not on the plan because there were so many roads needs in the community ? where would it end?

Council passed the motion to which Mayor Vivian Bloom noted it was only to gather information on needed road repairs.

During question period, ratepayer Harold Harris told council he was waiting for roads in his area to be repaired as well. They were on the plan but a few years into the future. He said if council wanted him to get people together such as those from North Baptiste Road to show his roads were in desperate need of attention as well, he would.

HPEDSB responds to council

Hastings Prince Edward District School Board has responded to Hastings Highlands letter of concern over how area student EQAO results compare to provincial averages.

Walder, who originally moved the motion for the letter, said the response didn't recognize there was a problem.

?The only thing that we can infer from this response is that the highest level of our school board's administration does not agree with us that there is a problem,? he said. ?Further discussion of this matter needs soon to be raised at another time in another forum.?