

HH council hears Seniors? Community Grant proposal

By Mike Riley

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The Municipality of Hasting Highlands council heard from Dorothy Gerrow, former deputy mayor, at their Feb. 15 meeting. Gerrow presented to council on a Seniors Community Grant proposal to expand services to seniors in Hastings Highlands and across North Hastings. Council was quite receptive to her presentation and said they would support the application process to expand seniors' programs in Hastings Highlands and eventually across North Hastings. Gerrow comments on her presentation to council.

Gerrow made her presentation on the Senior Community Grant proposal at the Feb. 15 Hastings Highlands council meeting. Mayor Tony Fitzgerald introduced Gerrow and asked her to proceed with her presentation. She said she had sent a letter to council in January about municipal grant inquiries with respect to seniors. She said that Deputy Mayor Tammy Davis sent her a link on this subject and that she'd further spoken with Hastings-Lennox and Addington MPP Ric Bresee's office who further directed her in the application process. Furthermore, she spoke with their Regional Development Advisor [for Sport/Recreation, Culture/Heritage, Seniors and Accessibility portfolios in Prince Edward County, Hastings County and Northumberland County] Kendra Adema, who she said was very helpful in answering her questions.

Gerrow told council that her future goal was to incorporate a not-for-profit organization for seniors in North Hastings to bring focus and programs for the increasing population of seniors in North Hastings, and that she'd been doing a lot of research on this.

?My ultimate goal is to have an enviable program for the area of North Hastings, more to come,? she says.

Gerrow said that from the municipality's Community Safety and Well Being Plan, she had been able to find out that 28.9 per cent of residents were 65 years of age and older.

?We keep that in mind, with the lack of programs in our area and I was told by [Adema] that we are an underserved area for programs for seniors in North Hastings. Today, with a grant of \$25,000 available to qualified applicants, my hope would be to start in Hastings Highlands first as a pilot project and work toward a more collaborative approach in the months ahead,? she says.

Gerrow said that the deadline for this grant was March 6, and that she'd been in contact with CAO David Stewart, who along with treasurer Tanya Dickinson, had also been in touch with Adema. Gerrow said she was willing to help in any way she could, and take the lead on the project if council agrees.

Gerrow revealed her immediate goals were to have a Seniors' Day with education information, and Elder Abuse seminar, bus trips to various activities and locales and to look into bring lawn bowling into the municipality for seniors for exercise and the social interaction.

?There are benefits to engaging senior citizens and this grant could offset that cost. Not everyone has an unlimited source of income at this age. And some nutrition, that is big as well. Because the cost of food has risen dramatically. So good nutrition; fruit trays and vegetable trays at these events would be of assistance,? she says.

While Gerrow said there was more research to do, she thought there was enough there to start if council agreed to do this. She also said that the municipality's strategic plan, vision statement and mission statement all supported such an initiative for seniors.

?We do have a couple of activities that provide seniors' programs, like euchre and pickleball. We need more in my view. There's a lot of people that sit at home, they've lost a spouse, and they need to get out and interact with the public and just enjoy their senior years,? she says.

Gerrow finished her presentation and Fitzgerald asked if there were any questions or comments. Councillor Nancy Matheson commented that back in 2018, she and Councillor Tracy Hagar held a Seniors' Expo with information stations, demonstrations and a lunch and learn seminar. They'd gotten a Seniors Community Grant at that time and the intention had been to start the process of becoming an aging friendly community. However, COVID-19 had stopped this initiative from happening at that point.

?Your proposal sounds like something that would build on our initial project and which could also be beneficial in your application,? she says.

Comments from the other councillors were all positive and supportive of Gerrow's presentation and plans going forward.

Gerrow told Bancroft This Week that she felt the presentation went well, and that she felt that comments from the council members were positive in nature.

?Deputy Mayor Davis did advise me, after I presented the delegation, that a notice of motion would be forthcoming from her, which is what I was hoping for. I am hopeful that council will support her motion to proceed with the grant application. Therefore, the steps would be, first for council to support the motion, secondly, with a motion passed by council, staff would follow the directive contained within the motion, which presumably would be to complete and file the grant application for review and decision. The grant application must be submitted by the March 6 deadline,? she says. ?Obviously I am hopeful that everything works out for our seniors.?