

Highlands East thrilled with broadband deal

By Angelica Ingram

The following are brief reports of items discussed at the Feb. 8 meeting of Highlands East council.

The municipality of Highlands East is happy to be signing onto a new high-speed Internet deal through the county of Haliburton with Bell, but would like to see more public spaces included.

Councillors heard details of the new proposal, from Mike March, manager of IT for the county and treasurer Elaine Taylor.

The initiative was done through the Eastern Ontario Regional Network and will see 24 public facilities get improved Internet to the tune of \$360,000, to be paid for by the county.

Buildings in Highlands East include the Gooderham, Wilberforce, Highlands Grove and Cardiff branches of the library, the Tory Hill EMS base, the Highlands East township office and the county's public works garage in Highland Grove.

A breakdown of costs show that the new arrangement will have Highlands East pay \$7,524 a month for the services, versus the \$4,140 they currently pay.

The total cost per month for the proposed service is \$13,224, with the county contributing \$5,700 per month.

"Bell is offering us a substantial discount for fibre services," said March, adding it was based on a 10-year contract.

The county will be covering the capital costs for the project, however the operating costs will be passed on to the municipalities, said March.

Councillor Joan Barton said the Wilberforce library branch is slated to receive DSL service, but believes it should be getting fibre Internet based on how much the library is used.

"This building is where we have our council meetings, it's our library," she said. "I would really like to see fibre come here."

March said he could look into this and would bring it back to the county.

"I'll have some discussions with the county and mention you're interested in having fibre optics here," he said.

Councillor Cec Ryall mentioned that the McCausland Community Centre in Gooderham does not have Internet available currently.

March said he would look into sharing options with other buildings in the area, such as the fire department in Gooderham.

Curling club floor underway

Work on the new floor for the Wilberforce Curling Club is in motion with property supervisor Jim Alden getting quotes for materials needed to go under the new concrete floor.

The ice surface floor became inoperable in December of last year and since then the curling club has been closed.

Alden said although the budget for 2016 has not yet been approved by council he would like permission to go ahead and buy materials needed prior to the concrete floor replacement tender going out in March.

The materials will cost approximately \$15,000 and are being purchased locally, said Alden.

"This material is needed as preliminary work prior to laying the brine pipes and pouring the concrete floor," Alden wrote in his report to council.

Council approved the request.

A tender for the new concrete floor will be going out in March, with work expected to be done in May.

Breakfast date for volunteers

In an effort to celebrate all those who contribute to life in Highlands East, the municipality has agreed to host a free volunteer recognition breakfast on Saturday, April 16.

The idea came from the recreation and culture committee, which wanted to give back to the area's volunteers during national volunteer week, which is set for April 10 to 16 this year.

The committee suggested hosting a breakfast at the Lloyd Watson Centre, with breakfast prepared by councillors, said Curtis Tighe, trails and economic development co-ordinator for Highlands East.

Barton asked how it was going to be determined who should attend and Tighe said it will be open to anyone who wanted to come.

Chief administrative officer Shannon Hunter said that volunteers should not be involved in working the event, as that defeats the

purpose, and that council and staff should be putting it on.
Council agreed to the idea and will be advertising the event.