

New housing development coming to Bancroft



By Tony Pearson

Many people have wondered what might happen with the old Bancroft public school, after the property was sold last June. At last week's meeting of town council, Eric Toupin revealed that it will indeed become a housing development ? the Emerald Hills Adult Living Project. The school building will house 16 apartment units, eight on each floor. The former gym will house another two units. At a later date, three "fourplex" buildings will be constructed on Faraday. Although Emerald Hills is not a seniors complex, four of the units will be barrier-free, and fully suitable for physically limited tenants.

Toupin further added that the whole area would contain ample green space, including a community garden. There will also be recreational spaces within the building. Asked about rents, Toupin said the pricing would be mid-range rather than upscale. Tenants will be able to keep their new housing secure by looking into home warranty plans, from such companies as <https://homewarranty.firstam.com/homeowner/home-warranty/california>, for their appliances and electrical systems, so they know they are in capable hands when they move in.

Another positive highlight noted at Council was the upcoming street hockey tournament. Council agreed to close Hastings Street from Flint to Station from 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. on Saturday, Feb. 14 ? Valentine's Day for the hockey games. But as Tracy McGibbon outlined, there will be more to the day, with games and movies at the Playhouse ? including Roch Carrier's classic *The Hockey Sweater* (accordingly, anyone wearing a hockey sweater will get free admission). Hockey will also be on-screen in the evening, as "Goon" screens for date night. The event is partnered with Hospice North Hastings.

More questions were devoted to the issue of the township's "missing" unfunded liabilities, including "Who knew?" and "When did they know?", as well as "How can we be sure it won't happen again?". Chief administrative officer Hazel Lambe stated that staff would make sure that every spending initiative would include an exact source of funding, or be clearly labelled as "unfunded", with council made aware of this on an ongoing basis.

Mayor Bernice Jenkins said that to avoid being "blind-sided" in future, council would discuss further how special allocations made outside the budget process ? for emergencies, or to take advantage of financial opportunities ? would clearly be flagged to council, and assigned to a funding source.

In some potentially good financial news, CAO Lambe reported that the provincial minister of finance had indicated sympathy for the township opposition to the drastic increase in the valuation of the Dungannon landfill, which could lead to higher county taxes and reduced provincial funding for Bancroft and its ratepayers. Also, the Age Friendly Community and Canada Celebrations grant applications are moving along, as is the Community safety pilot project. In addition, the request of interest in the proposed Earth

Science Centre brought in seven submissions.

Lambe also reported that as announced, each township department was preparing its own sustainability plans; this includes energy management and other aspects of climate change harm reduction. The town is looking to issue a request for a proposal to revamp the township's heating systems. In questioning of the CAO report, Councillor Barry McGibbon wanted to know if the town had strict rules and measures to prevent staff from accessing social media for personal use on work time; Lambe assured him that control measures were in place.

Council was also advised that a rate increase for town water will be proposed. After two years without an increase, the recommendation is that rates rise two per cent a year for the next five years (10 per cent overall). However, before that proposal is voted on, the town will hold a public meeting.

A briefing by county planning office officials was accompanied by a bylaw amendment to make it easier for those wishing to add a second living unit to their property to do so without seeking a re-zoning of their property, provided all town building bylaws such as on parking were met.

In other business, council agreed in principle to tape all its public meetings; staff will report to the next meeting on admin issues like storage. The motion originally put forward by Councillor Bill Kilpatrick would also have taped closed (in camera) meetings, but concerns about confidentiality, including the potential for hacking, led to a restriction in scope to meetings open to the public.

Council also agreed to follow past practice and apply for a provincial gas tax rebate, which would go to support the TROUT public transit system.

The township honoured a number of its employees for their years of service, including works manager Perry Kelly, chief building official Dale Shannick, and fire chief Pat Hoover, as well as Greg Maxwell and 25 year veteran Mike Moynes. Following their nomination by the town, two agencies were also honoured with certificates of achievement from the Ontario Heritage Trust. Frank and Wendy Melanson accepted on behalf of the Bancroft Gem and Mineral Club for its work in creating the gem and mineral museum, and board president Mike Daly accepted for the Chamber of Commerce for its restoration of the Bancroft train station.