

Pointing the finger in Coe Hill



By Jim Eadie

If the growing number of independent businesses in and around Coe Hill has their way, there should shortly be a sign installed in the hamlet pointing the way for visitors. Jono Gooch, a local woodworking artisan brought the idea to Wollaston Council at their Jun 23 regular meeting, and they were clearly impressed with the novel idea.

Several months ago during a conversation Gooch had with the new owner of the Artisans Café, Shawna Lockhart, a vision was hatched for an old fashioned 'western' direction sign somewhere on the main street pointing to local businesses. Since that time, the idea has been re-worked.

Gooch is constructing a large 'sign tree' that he hopes to install on private property at the corner of Hwy 620 and the Wollaston Lake Rd. directly across the road from the Artisan Café. Fastened to the tree will be large pointing fingers with a business name on each finger pointed in the direction of that business.

'For online businesses without a retail location, there will be thought bubbles containing their Internet address,' Gooch told council. He noted that it is a simple job to change fingers and bubbles if new businesses come to town, or if there is any changes to current businesses. Fourteen businesses so far are interested in participating and would pay the cost of manufacturing their own finger, and a share of the total cost of the installation. Gooch has already cleared the proposed location of the sign with the municipal roads superintendent.

'I personally love this idea,' said Deputy Reeve Marilyn Brickles. 'We are really starting to develop local businesses here ? it is really exciting! How can we encourage business and growth here? I wonder if we can support this through our revitalization fund?? At the end of the discussion, council approved the installation of the sign on private property, and committed to look into making a revitalization subsidy available for participating businesses under the Community Improvement Plan (CIP). The plan currently

provides a subsidy to individuals and businesses undertaking façade improvements within the hamlet of Coe Hill.

When asked by Reeve Graham Blair, Gooch told council that he plans to look after maintaining the sign in the future. "My wife and I moved to this town, and we are committed to staying in this town," he said.

"I just would like to do my bit," Gooch later told Bancroft This Week. "The sign is not art, because it has a function," he said, "it is a sign which will point you in the right direction." From viewing his drawings and a model of the proposed sign it would be safe to describe it as artistic.

"Like our lakes and forests, I believe that our community in Coe Hill is a natural resource," he said. "Wollaston Lake ? we swim in it, relax by it, use it to water our gardens ? but we need to be responsible, take care of it, not abuse it. That is my philosophy that leads me in the right direction. I value this community, and I want to help take care of it in the same way."

Gooch hopes to have the "Business Directory Tree" installed in the next few weeks in time for the busy summer months.