

Bancroft Council considers new expenditures

By Tony Pearson

During its committee of the whole meeting last week, Bancroft Town Council learned about what needs fixing, and what some of the costs are. A major expenditure will involve the replacement of the furnace in the town office building, which has broken down a number of times.

Previously, Council had indicated its preference to shift to a propane system; the estimated cost was in the neighbourhood of \$60,000. They said that with the amount of money they were spending on running the current furnace as well as getting furnace repair Lynchburg, it was worth replacing it now as it will save money in the long run. However, the township has been alerted to the possibility of securing a used oil furnace at a cost of \$18,000, with no need to re-engineer the heating system. As much depends on fuel costs over the next decade, the township will go back and ask again for proposals and costs.

The township received good news about the [cardboard balers and compactors](#) at the landfill, which suffered major damage last year. Original cost estimates seemed too high to merit repair; however, as new quote means that it can be fixed for about \$2,000. Accordingly, the repairs will be done while staff looks at the overall financial picture on recycling ? including the possibility of staff doing curbside pick-up, rather than an outside contractor.

Road repairs will take up a large chunk of this year's budget, especially as some roads are in very poor condition. Public Works Manager Perry Kelly presented a report which showed that over two million dollars could easily be spent in 2015 if all priority roads were re-surfaced; this does not include attendant work on water and sewer connections. Chemaushgon would require the largest expenditure, at over a million dollars.

Other priorities are Valleyview, Quarry Road, Bronson, Upper Turiff, Lakeview, and Holland Lake, as well as Landon, Fraser, Harley, and Snow Roads. In addition, projected work for 2016 especially on Detlor and Hastings South, as well as Pinnacle, Lower Turiff, Old L'Amable, and Bronson again would cost another two million dollars. There was some discussion of the most cost-efficient methods for these operations, as per kilometre costs of repair range from \$17,000 to \$225,000 for resurfacing, and from three hundred thousand to a million and a half for full depth reconstruction, depending on the materials used in resurfacing (which in turn depends on whether the road is rural or in town), as well as the amount of time needed between repairs.

Road conditions were also an item of discussion around the public works manager's report on the costs of the Rally of the Tall Pines. Kelly gave the total township expenditure, for sponsorship, outhouse rental, and staff time for set-up and take-down as \$13,666. However, Dungannon councillors had a number of questions. Charles Mullett wanted to know about the cost of grading roads before and after the race; Kelly replied that this was part of regular township maintenance.

Barry McGibbon noted costs to area businesses from reduced customer traffic, and suggested that the race tore roads up, requiring more township spending on repairs. Bill Kilpatrick noted that many of the food suppliers came from out of town, and left once the rally was over; Paul Jenkins noted that the rally had only a minimal impact on downtown merchants. Kilpatrick asked whether the Business Improvement Association should take over the township's sponsorship. Ian Hoeksema, who made public a number of concerns before this year's rally, had a number of concerns about costs and benefits as well.

He wondered if the Rally claim of 3,500 spectators was truly accurate. He also suggested that the township incurred extra policing costs, and noted that the rally damaged Dungannon's soccer and baseball grounds, as well as creating extra hydro costs. Like the Dungannon councillors, Hoeksema stated that he was not opposed to the event, but just wanted the Rally organizers to pick up the true extra costs caused by the race. Mayor Bernice Jenkins noted that the Rally people would be coming to Council in March, and that a list of questions be developed for this visit.

In other areas, Council learned that the energy audit of the town streetlights was complete, and that work could start shortly on conversion to LED lighting, at a cost of \$240,000, which would be recovered from lowered hydro costs and provincial rebate programs. Public works manager Kelly also suggested that the Township consider building its own sand storage building, which would cost \$225,000; a report on this will come to council for decision in the near future.

The proposal to record council meetings ran into difficulties when the report back from staff focused on a live video streaming system. The cost of such a system was formidable: about \$2,000 to get started, and \$1,400 a year to maintain ? with major storage space problems. Councillor Kilpatrick, who proposed recording council meetings, explained that such a system was far too elaborate, since only audio recording was required, and streaming was not needed. In the end, it was decided to check further with the county.

Council also received a report from Dale Shannick; it indicated that building growth had slowed in 2014, although the Emerald Hills

development offered much promise in 2015. Barry McGibbon asked if the township was looking at ways to ease construction restrictions, to allow for modular homes (similar to these manufactured homes we already allow to be built), or conversion of garages to living space. In this connection, Councillor Mary Kavanagh asked specifically about so-called "granny flats", which now require a variance application to build.

Mayor Jenkins promised that a review of standards would be carried out, one which also took into account implications for neighbours, future owners, and the town itself ? for example, what the minimum standard could be for proper water and sewage. Standards were also advanced for use of social media, both by the town, and by its employees. In addition, treasurer Craig Davidson once again explained what "unfunded capital" meant, hoping to remove some of the suggestion that it is "hiding" major expenditures. He noted that the process is a normal part of municipal accounting, as it allows capital expenses to be spread over several years. He believed that greater clarity in the budget process would improve understanding.

Deputy Mayor Paul Jenkins, chair of the finance committee, observed that converting unfunded capital to long term debt neither increased nor decreased the town's debt load, but did improve cash flow management. As well as purely municipal issues, the CAO produced a list of issues the township hoped to bring up with the province. In addition to the usual items like OPP charges and support for the proposed Earth Sciences Centre, the town hopes to talk to the Ministry of Natural Resources about becoming more "pro-active" in drawing down water levels in the fall, to avoid spring flooding.