

Bancroft seeks solution on sewers

By Tony Pearson

The sewer deficit remains the main drain on Bancroft's finances, and new measures are being taken to shut the valve on the money leak.

Works manager Perry Kelly brought one possible tightening action to last week's meeting of council's committee of the whole: the capping of sewer lines when buildings are demolished.

Kelly reported that current town records do not show if lines to the sewer system are in fact cut off when demolition takes place. This means that water collecting at the site can continue to flow through the system to the treatment plant, and on to the township's sewer bill.

Kelly is bringing in a contractor to excavate and find out whether action was taken at the site; if not, the works department will do the capping itself. In addition, all future demolition permits issued by the town will require such capping, confirmed by town inspection.

In a further move, the town committee set up to investigate the problem is calling for more public input.

If anyone knows of water infiltration sources to the sewer system, such as damaged manhole covers, downspouts emptying into sewer lines, or aged leaky piping, they are asked to report these to the town's deputy clerk Liane Sauter at lsauter@bancroft.ca, to Councillor Mary Kavanagh at 613-332-4055, or to the municipal office.

Meanwhile the committee will continue checking for illegal connections of downspouts and sump pumps.

In other township news, chief building officer Dale Shannick reported that 2015 saw a real rise in the number of building permits issued.

In total, value of new construction more than doubled over the previous year (from \$2 million to \$4.5 million). In turn, the township's fee revenues also more than doubled, from \$25,000 to \$61,000.

A report from the bylaw enforcement officer about a complaint of an out-of-town cab picking up local fares found the charge unsubstantiated.

Nonetheless, it sparked a discussion of the growing Uber phenomenon, where private drivers take calls for fares.

In larger cities, including Toronto and Ottawa, this has led to serious clashes with taxi drivers, who feel that unlicensed drivers are both unfair and unsafe.

CAO Hazel Lambe noted that the Uber concept, if brought to Bancroft, could negatively impact both Bancroft Community Transit and the TROUT. Councillor Mary Kavanagh recommended a review of town bylaws to block any Uber infiltration.

Fire chief Pat Hoover presented summary statistics for 2015 that showed the fire department responded to more false alarms and on-route cancellations than it did to actual fires or other emergencies.

Council agreed to drop its fee for a closed meeting investigation application, bringing Bancroft in line with other area municipalities.

Finally, the deputy clerk filed a report on council member remuneration and expenses (including travel, training, and conferences).

Mayor Bernice Jenkins topped the list with \$32,381, with base pay of \$26,040; Deputy Mayor Paul Jenkins was at \$21,269, with base pay of \$18,445. All other councillors were between \$15,000 and \$17,500, with base pay of \$15,190.

As a group, councillors attended 93 per cent of meetings of council and committee of the whole.