

Bancroft to acquire train station

By Tony Pearson

At a special meeting last week, Bancroft's town council voted to 'acquire' the restored railway station downtown. Plans are to convert the building into the town offices.

The station was originally built for the Central Ontario Railway, which opened a line to Bancroft in 1900. The building is currently owned by the Bancroft and District Chamber of Commerce, which restored the building with Heritage grants; these grants stipulated that the chamber operate a visitor information centre for a period of 10 years.

Last September, the chamber wrote the town to announce that although it owed Bancroft more than \$50,000 in back taxes, it has been unable to secure funding - mortgage, loan, or line of credit - to allow it to repay what it owes. The letter also stated that the chamber was having difficulty maintaining all the costs of the building.

Bancroft had a right of first refusal on the sale of the building, although it had not previously indicated a desire to exercise this option. Therefore the chamber asked the town to waive all outstanding and future taxes, or else remove or exercise its option to take over the building.

Presumably because of the taxes owing, the town states that it is acquiring rather than buying the building. The details of the deal are to be made public on Dec. 15.

Bancroft's plan is to move the town offices to the railway station. Council also intends to hold its meetings there. The estimate is that the new location will cost far less than the operating expense of the current building on Flint Street.

As for the current town office building, it could be sold - a much appreciated contribution to town finances. Alternately, it could house the library, now located in a building cramped for space and without handicap access. In that event, the library building would be put up for sale.

Meanwhile, the mineral museum will remain in the railway station. The town also expects to continue the present visitor information centre.

Mayor Bernice Jenkins was 'thrilled' with the deal, which she described as win-win - 'good news for everyone'. chamber president Mike Daly agreed, affirming that the deal preserves the station and the museum. Daly stated that the chamber has plans for a new location, along with the artisans junction shop now in the station.