

Compliance for campgrounds on environmental regs

By Chad Ingram

The following are brief reports of items discussed during a Dec. 14 meeting of Highlands East council.

Highlands East council is asking staff to draw up a bylaw that would ensure campgrounds comply with the township's environmental regulations.

That recommendation came from the township's environmental committee.

"I think this is long overdue," said Deputy-reeve Suzanne Partridge. "We have sort of put this on the back burner for years and years."

Councillors Joan Barton was concerned about creating a framework where the township was policing one particular kind of business.

"I just don't want to set up a scenario that penalizes an entire group of business owners," Barton said, adding that was especially true if the program was being created to deal with a single business owner with instances of non-compliance.

Partridge stressed that it was an environmental issue.

"I think all of our campgrounds and trailer parks are on waterbodies," she said.

Staff will draw up a bylaw that will come back to council.

Business retention and expansion

Councillors are supportive of a businesses retention and expansion plan being put together by a working group containing members of the township's economic development committee, which is working with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

"A business retention and expansion program, really, is the heart blood of everything that drives us economically," said Councillor Cec Ryall.

Councillor Joan Barton said having such a plan in place will help the township attain grants.

"This is going to make all of our applications stronger," Barton said.

The creation of the plan will come with a \$7,500 price tag for the municipality.

Re-examining wards

Council received a staff report on ward structure and council composition and will be discussing the issue further in January.

The Municipal Act allows councils to redivide municipal wards or dissolve existing wards.

Such a process is a lengthy one, requiring a public meeting, as well as a 45-day appeal period where residents can protest any changes to the Ontario Municipal Board.

For the current council term, public meetings would need to take place in 2016, with the whole process, including dealing with any appeals, complete by the end of 2017.