

Council discusses reeve allegations

By Jim Eadie

Wollaston Township council has been left reeling following the news that the township Reeve Graham Blair has been arrested for a second time this year within the municipality.

Blair was released on bail after he was charged with impaired driving Oct. 10, to appear in Bancroft court on Oct. 18. He didn't appear and the case was adjourned from first appearance until Nov 15. The first charge, which was also for impaired driving, has not been resolved, and is set for trial on March 14, 2017 in Bancroft. Neither of the charges have been proved in court.

On Oct. 11, Wollaston council met for their regular meeting. Blair was absent and with the deputy reeve out of town, the meeting was chaired by Councillor Bob Ireland. In response to questions from residents attending the meeting, Ireland noted at that moment he had not yet spoken to Blair.

"As time passes, we will have more information," he said. "Our council will go forward and operate as we are supposed to, and have been."

Local businesswoman Karen Challinor, speaking on behalf of herself and her husband Chris, told council that on Oct. 6 her husband had attended the municipal office on business and in his opinion found Blair "incoherent, slurring his speech, and seeming to disrupt the office atmosphere."

"We both want to ensure that the staff are comfortable with the workplace atmosphere," she said.

"We will have a discussion with the staff," said Ireland.

"I think we need to go into a closed session," said Councillor Michael Fuerth. Council completed their meeting in closed session.

Two days later, on Oct. 13, council met again in a special closed session meeting. Township clerk Jennifer Cohen confirmed that the meeting took place, and that council had decided to make no further comment at that time.

Both closed sessions of council were held under the provisions of section 239(b) of the municipal act which allows closing a meeting to discuss personal matters about an identifiable individual, including municipal or local board employees. During a meeting, or portion of a meeting that is declared closed, members of the public are excluded from the meeting, and the meeting participants are not to disclose the substance of any discussion later in public.

"We are just waiting to hear from Graham (Blair) about his plans," said Ireland. "At the moment we have no indication what his plans are. In the meantime, we will continue to meet with Deputy Reeve Marilyn Brickles chairing our meetings."

Blair declined to make any comment when contacted.

"I am at a crossroads," he told *Bancroft This Week*. "I will have something to say later in the week."