

## Council plans to increase shore road allowances

**By Sarah Sobanski**

Hastings Highlands council is reviewing doubling its sale costs for shore road allowances.

Council is directing municipal staff to develop a bylaw increasing the land acquisition cost to a minimum of \$2,000 for the first 150 feet and \$3 per foot over 150 feet for shore road allowances. Council approved the direction in a split vote of four to three.

The staff report for the costs states that the new cost recommendations are a result of consultations with three local real estate agents.

It also reviewed fee structures for sale of shore road allowances from Algonquin Highlands, Faraday, Highlands East, South Algonquin and Madawaska Valley. None of these municipalities will be implementing a change to fees by Dec. 31.

“We as a council have a judiciary responsibility to our rate payers not to give away the property at fire sale rates,” said Councillor Alex Walder. “The other municipalities, those figures are only good until Dec. 31. They could very well be in the process of matching or surpassing our rates. I think we need to be a leader in this aspect and accept the figure. Still, \$2,000 over the lifespan of a property – how many times can it be resold afterwards as a far more valuable asset. It’s absolutely not out of line.”

“The argument is out there whether it’s virtually, not worthless to us, but it’s not an item that’s of value to the municipality. It’s only of value to the landowner and with real estate bouncing all over the place, and it’s dropping right now,” argued Deputy Mayor Gregg Roberts, who was among other councillors suggesting that costs increase at a lower rate.

The lower rates suggested included \$1,500 for the first 150 feet.

“The land is not useless but basically useless as in the fact that we can’t sell it to anyone else except the property owner,” agreed Councillor Tracy Hagar. “We don’t want to scare people off by coming up with a higher price right now. We want people to buy their shore road allowances because in the long run it will bring their assessment value up which means more tax dollars. We want to encourage people on one hand, but we also want to respect the work of our planning clerk.”

The bylaw will be presented to council at its Jan. 18 meeting in 2017.