

Dungannon landfill remains closed to other townships

By Tony Pearson

Picking up on an issue that proved a hot topic in last fall's election, Councillor Charles Mullet made sure at last week's meeting of Bancroft Council that the landfill serving Bancroft and Faraday was not opened up to other municipalities. The issue was triggered by a request from Limerick, originally brought up in closed session but moved by Mullet to the open session.

Works manager Perry Kelly noted that the amount was not large - an addition of a hundred tonnes annually, compared to current volume of 1,700 tonnes - and would save waste costs for Limerick. Deputy Mayor Paul Jenkins noted that accepting outside waste might also be a cost benefit to Bancroft, and help defer costs of future expansion. Councillor Mullet observed that opening Phase Two of the current landfill was now not expected to cost a great deal. He and councillor Mary Kavanagh stated that opening the site to a new partner also opened the door to a number of other townships requesting the same treatment; Kavanagh called it a 'slippery slope' to over-use. Councillor Bill Kilpatrick said that inviting new partners went against the goal of reducing the township's environmental footprint.

In the end, on a recorded vote, only Deputy Mayor Jenkins opposed the continued restriction on the landfill ((Mayor Bernice Jenkins was away). Works manager Kelly said he would prepare a report for the CAO on future costs and timetables.

At the meeting, Council received the Collins-Barrow auditor's report on Bancroft finances, although members expressed surprise that the report had not been directed to the finance and growth committee first, as they had expected. CAO Hazel Lambe explained that it was a matter of timing, with an urgent need to get the report to the province by deadline. Council therefore 'accepted' the report based on the understanding and advice of the town's treasury department, and will study it in more detail at upcoming meetings of Finance and Committee of the Whole. Treasurer Craig Davidson promised a 'translation' of the document into terms comparable to those in the town budget just passed.

The report itself confirmed that as reported, overall town debt is around \$6.5 million to \$7 million; about two-thirds is long-term (payable later than 2020). Over the next five years, the town is expected to pay somewhat over one million dollars in interest. On the other hand, the town has positive reserves amounting to close to \$1.5 million, and the auditors' estimate of the value of the town's tangible assets is nearly \$23 million, about three-quarters of this in infrastructure (water and sewer, roads and bridges). The town owns about three and a half million dollars' worth of land and buildings, and another million worth of vehicles and equipment. In terms of affiliated operations, the library appears very financially healthy, with an accumulated surplus of \$120,000. The arena/community centre is also in the black, with cash revenues in excess of expense last year; their accumulated surplus is over \$350,000, although the vast majority of this surplus is the book value of their building and equipment. The dog pound and the Business Improvement Association also had operating surpluses. The North Hastings Museum, on the other hand, ran an operational deficit last year, with net accumulated financial assets now at only \$1,313.

In their covering letter, Collins-Barrow gave the town's financial accounting and reporting systems a thumbs-up. There was only one small disagreement about how to categorize water and sewer user deposits, which was settled to mutual satisfaction.

In other business, Council agreed to continue with the streetlight retro-fit to LED lighting. The total net cost will be just over \$190,000; with the resultant 69 per cent cut in hydro consumption, this spending should be recovered in three years. The BBIA is ready to put up the downtown banners, and the flower boxes are out; the association will host a 'design showcase' for Hastings Street storefront improvements on June 24. Five proposals are in to do a feasibility study and business plan for the proposed Earth Sciences Centre, with half the cost picked up by Community Futures. Agreements have been reached with respect to the new Farmers' Market in Millennium Park, and the community gardens in Riverside Park. Contracts for improvements to Quarry Road and Snow Road were awarded. And the Emerald Hills housing development is moving ahead.

In terms of municipal recognition, Bancroft recently received the E.A. Danby award for small communities from the provincial association of municipal managers. This award, designed to honour innovation and efficiency in municipal projects, was given for the speedy completion of the Bridge Street bridge, and particularly the community involvement in maintaining business during closure. Councillors also noted the attraction of the Riverside Skate Park to skaters from many parts of Ontario and Quebec. Grants from Kraft's Project Play have been received, and councillor Tracy McGibbon expressed the hope that a splash pad at Riverside might become a possibility.