

Highlands East looking at ATM alternative to bank

By Angelica Ingram

The following are brief reports of items discussed at the Nov. 14 meeting of Highlands East council.

While the Highlands East group People Before Profits continues to investigate the option of having a financial institution replace Wilberforce's Scotiabank, the municipality is seeking other options to ensure bank services are offered in the area.

Chief administrative officer Shannon Hunter told councillors that the township has been looking into the option of a full-service automated banking machine.

"While the various financial institutions are reviewing our business case, we are also trying to prepare for the worst-case scenario," wrote Hunter in her report to council.

Hunter asked council if there were any municipal buildings they could suggest to house an ATM. Prior to offering up a location, financial institutions would want to know the criteria of these locations, such as the building's operating hours, would the township require compensation and does the ATM need to be full service (as in accept deposits)?

Councillor Joan Barton suggested adapting the entranceway at the Lloyd Watson Centre to accommodate an ATM.

Councillor Cec Ryall thought this suggestion was a good one but said he would prefer to see the machine in a private business.

"That way there is a chance you will spend money there," said Ryall.

Hunter said one of the comments from local businesses is there is a lack of space in their building for an ATM.

Ryall also suggested installing a machine outside a business, alleviating the space issue.

Barton pointed to the Keith Tallman arena as an option. If a municipal building was used council would not charge rent and appropriate signage for the ATM could be erected.

Council decided to investigate this further before making a decision.

Cardiff water upgrades move forward

Following a public meeting held in Cardiff on Oct. 27, council is moving forward with upgrades to the Cardiff potable water service replacement.

Council agreed to tender the project to Fowler Construction, in the amount of \$1,058,460.92.

To help cover the costs of the project, \$300,000 will be transferred from Ward 1 water/sewer reserves, while almost \$700,000 is being covered through provincial and federal funding.

The remaining balance of \$184,144.83 will be passed on to the 261 users of the water system upon completion of the upgrades, wrote Hunter in her report to council.

Tourism centre stats

A report on the inaugural year for the information centre was presented to council by economic development and business co-ordinator Curtis Tighe.

Open from May to October in 2016, the info centre located within the Wilberforce Curling Club received 1,071 visitors, with the most popular month being July with a total of 316 visitors.

Of the visitors, 626 were tourists, said Tighe.

The No. 1 reason for a visit was mineral collecting, followed by general information. Visitors came from all over Canada, the U.S.A., Europe and New Zealand.

Ranked ballots a no-go

Highlands East council has decided not to introduce a ranked ballot option for the 2018 election.

The change was introduced as a possible voting alternative in the most recent update to the Municipal Elections Act.

Councillors thought the option would be too costly for the small municipality and said in many cases there are only two candidates vying for a seat.

A ranked ballot system would allow a voter to rank their choices in order of preference instead of picking just one candidate.