

Public art project proposed for Coe Hill

Jono Gooch, a Coe Hill resident and artist, shows a model of his proposed public art installation for the corner of Hwy 620 and Wollaston Lake Road. that he had brought to his presentation at Wollaston Township council on April 25. / JIM EADIE Special to This Week

By Jim Eadie

Wollaston council heard a couple of interesting proposals from residents at its April 25 regular meeting.

Several years ago, a local artist and woodworker, Jono Gooch, was given permission to erect a finger pointing directional tree in the hamlet of Coe Hill. He now proposes to erect a second piece of public art for the corner of Hwy 620 and Wollaston Lake Rd. Gooch is no stranger to public art. He has worked in the past on Toronto Transit Commission projects to place pieces of public art on its barns and stockyards in downtown Toronto.

“Unsavory looking sites,” Gooch noted.

A small model of his plan brought to council shows a whimsical fence type structure with a rainbow, and the words: “There's no hill like Coe Hill.”

“It's not a fence, and it is not a sign,” he told council. “It is art. I see all of the fence boards as the citizens of Wollaston township – all a little different, standing together – it looks like some are standing on their heads from time to time. The wordage is not mine, it comes from the harvest parties that used to be held down the South Road. There will be no advertising on the installation, but I will leave space for seasonal decorations – for example, painted Easter eggs made by the school children.”

Cost to the township is estimated to be \$3,326, and in any case not more than that.

“I like it,” said Councillor David Naulls. “I like the idea.”

“I think it's a terrific idea,” said Reeve Graham Blair. “I like it a lot.”

“Public art invites people to get out, and be around together,” Gooch later told *Bancroft This Week*. “It is outside, you don't have to go inside or to a gallery to see it. People in Coe Hill get to watch the project unfold. When I was constructing the directional tree, it was almost like performance art. People visiting the café across the street watched – it was a very different experience – the execution of art out in the public, and not in a studio.”

Gooch hopes to arrange for and install the new proposed piece by Canada Day.

“Things like this can raise the morale of our community – we need a boost,” he said. “This is the best thing I could think of doing to make people feel better.”

Making a separate presentation to council, Wendy Mortimer brought a proposal for the township to sponsor a weekly summer flea market and farmers' market at the municipally owned pavilion in Coe Hill.

“The farmers' market is not anymore,” she told council. “That was a real draw for people, and has left a big gap.”

Mortimer noted that a municipally sponsored flea market in Marmora is a huge draw for that town. Mortimer is willing to volunteer organizing such an event, and gathering some volunteer assistance. Her proposal would see free space for any businesses, services, or individuals to offer fresh organic produce, prepared food, hand crafted items and artwork, business promotions, and garage/yard sale items.

“I really like the idea,” said Blair. “It would be great for this community.”

Council deferred their decision to research the implications for the municipality.