

## Rally of the Tall Pines asked to do more for Bancroft

By Tony Pearson

Rally of the Tall Pines organizer Ian Wright came to last week's meeting of Bancroft Town Council to offer a report on the economics of the 2014 Rally, and seek Council support for this year's event. However, several councillors raised concerns about the economic impact of the Rally, and its actual costs to the Township. As well, town staff delivered a new and higher estimate of the Rally's costs to the Township.

Wright's contention, based on results of a survey done by the Rally organization, is that the event brought more than \$500,000 to the Bancroft area, mainly from spectators. Wright suggested that attendance could be conservatively estimated at 4,000, based on a 1,000 cars coming into Bancroft, with an estimated four passengers per car. He allotted a third of the spending to accommodations and a quarter to meals. However, local businessman Ian Hoeksema reported that calls to both the Sword Best Western and the Bancroft Motor Inn on race weekend indicated that both had vacancies; as well, the Granite and the Bancroft Eatery showed no line-ups on either Friday or Saturday. (Wright mentioned that the number of cottages rented was up, and groceries represented about a tenth of total expenditures)

Both Bill Kilpatrick and Barry McGibbon, councillors from Dungannon ward, suggested that it was time for the Rally to finance more of the costs associated with it. In this connection, CAO Hazel Lambe produced a breakdown on costs which showed more in-kind town staff services than previously noted. Direct costs, including a Rally sponsorship fee, were \$7,563, while in-kind town costs, including the waiving of rental fees for town facilities like the Dungannon soccer field, were estimated at \$7,395, for a total expenditure of nearly \$15,000. As was pointed out in the discussion, this did not include extra OPP charges for policing the rally area. Barry McGibbon also thought, based on personal experience, that there were lost revenues for many Dungannon businesses, and more costs that cited needed to repair roads after the races.

Deputy Mayor Paul Jenkins stated that some Rally activity should take place within Bancroft in future, as Bancroft merchants did not see much economic activity resulting from the race weekend. Kilpatrick noted again that the chip trucks which provided many of the meals were from outside the township, and wanted the 2015 survey to include downtown businesses. As a further example of increasing local spending, Mayor Bernice Jenkins stated that the Rally should now be able to purchase its racing fuel from the Flying Club's airport. In the end, Wright agreed to consult with local food vendors and with the Bancroft Business Improvement Association, and also learn more about McGibbon's concerns about business closures and road damage.

In other township business, council heard from the Ontario clean Water Agency (OCWA), which runs the town's drinking water system, that this winter's cold weather had increased the number of problems with frozen pipes ? fourteen complaints received, with three town homes still on a temporary water supply. As well, frost-caused sewer back-ops were a concern. Early alerts to homes to keep their water running had prevented more water shut-downs, but not eliminated them ? York River Public School being a case in point. But although there had been some complaints of coloured water, OCWA reported that overall water quality remained high.

In a related action, Council endorsed the Sewer and Water Line Warranty service through SLWC and LAS, an affiliate of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. This will permit LAS to market ?insurance? against damage to a homeowner's water and sewer pipes ? the section between the home and the town property line. Fifty five dollars would insure water line repairs to a limit of \$5,000; \$64 a year would insure sewers to \$8,000. The town would collect a five per cent royalty on all sales.

Councillors reached into their own pockets to help North Hastings Youth in Action send a member to a community leadership training session under the auspices of ?Me to We?, an offshoot of the ?Free The Children? foundation. The cost is \$333 per trainee, which was worked out to \$58 a councillor. Organizer Rebecca Malloy cited personal experience of the need to develop social leadership skills through training and experience outside the home community, and pledged that local youth trained at the ME to WE centre would return more able to help Bancroft's social development and enterprise.

Council also agreed to the draft agreement between the Fire Department and the Ministry of Natural Resources & Forestry, which

delineates the areas of fire responsibility of each within the township, and sets charges for using one another's resources; fire chief Pat Hoover stated that the agreement was fair to both sides. On a different jurisdictional issue, Councillors unanimously rejected the suggestion from the Hastings Country Clerks Association to transfer responsibility for emergency measures from the municipality to the County; it was felt that the existing system worked well, especially as demonstrated in dealing with the 2013 flood. In line with emergency planning, the town will talk to Bracebridge Power and MNR about how to prevent flooding this spring.

As covered in this paper two weeks ago, Mayor Jenkins gave a report on Bancroft delegations to the provincial government at the Rural Ontario Municipalities Association conference, and the hopeful signs on the York River plan, the Nutrient Act, connecting links, and public landfill assessment.

Finally, council agreed to consider creating the position of Economic Development Officer when drawing up the annual budget. As recommended by Committee of the Whole, they also approved the expenditure of \$3,000 to bring the 'Smash Wrestling' event to Bancroft on the Victoria Day weekend, the amount to be offset by ticket sales.