

Second home bylaws coming

By Sarah Sobanski

Hastings Highlands intends to approve legislation for secondary dwellings. According to Mayor Vivian Bloom, such bylaws could mean affordable housing for the area.

Hastings County planner Mark Pedersen made a presentation on second dwelling units to Hastings Highlands council Nov. 1. The province has mandated second unit policies be included in county official plans as a part of its Strong Communities through Affordable Housing Act. That means municipalities have to have policies in place as well.

"We don't have housing. That is so badly needed here," said Bloom. She noted seniors, children wanting to support their parents as they get older, and/or those who find jobs in the area but have nowhere to stay need homes.

"There was a young guy who had got a job in Bancroft and he couldn't find, at that point in August, a place to live. He was sleeping in his car, because he had finally got a full-time job, but couldn't find a place he could afford or a place right away," she said. "We need small homes, we need homes that people can afford. If we can put a secondary unit - whether it's detached unit over a garage or a basement apartment or a tiny home - you can't have people with nowhere to go."

Pedersen presented a concept bylaw for second dwelling units policy, which was also being presented to each of the county's 14 member municipalities. He said it opened up the county to discuss with and assist municipalities in creating their secondary dwelling bylaws and gave them an idea of what such a bylaw would entail.

According to Pedersen, a second dwelling unit can be in a primary residence, an addition to one or a separate structure. His presentation suggested units should be permitted because they increase the supply of affordable housing, facilitate aging-in-place, provide for intensification and provide a source of rental income to property owners.

"If people want them and they're within good planning and whatnot then I just think why not?" said Bloom.

Council accepted the report and moved to have the concept bylaw brought back to be passed after the county's official plan was in place.