

Town assessment increase minimal

By Tony Pearson

Bancroft ratepayers learned last week that their assessments are not likely to increase much next year. Catherine Barr, account manager for the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) reported that single family residences were only up half a percent in value over the last year. Waterfront property, which had seen large increases previously, was now essentially staying at its current level.

Most homeowners should get their assessments in the mail next week; farm owners, businesses, and apartment owners will get theirs in the fall. People who want more information about their assessments can go to the website, About My Property. For those who feel that their property is assessed at too high a level will now have six months to file a ?request for re-assessment? (by Sept. 6); they can do this by phone, online, or by visiting an MPAC office (reps are at the township office every second Thursday).

Deputy Mayor Paul Jenkins expressed concern that so many ?big box? and chain stores are getting substantially lower assessments from the Review Board, imperilling municipal finances. Barr stated that they're ?trying to get the methodology right?. Mayor Bernice Jenkins wanted to know when Bancroft would get an answer to the proposed drastic increase in the assessment of its landfill's value; she was informed that this was with the Finance Ministry.

Council took another look at its grants allocations. First, it approved \$3,000 for additional town costs to supervise street closures for the Wheels/Water/Wings festival. It also approved \$3,000 for the Art Gallery to display and promote a special August exhibition of Algonquin native art.

However, council declined to restore funding previously given to the Chamber of Commerce to manage the town's visitors' centre. This was despite new information from the County, declaring that none of its financial support of the Chamber could go toward the visitors' centre. Councillor Charles Mullet observed that the Chamber's current website visitor information doesn't even mention Canada Day or WWW. Councillor Mary Kavanagh felt that the town may not need a year-round centre, and that the town could open its own this summer. Deputy Mayor Jenkins felt this would be unnecessary duplication. Nonetheless, councillors Mullin, Kavanagh, and Tracy McGibbon joined to defeat Councillor Bill Kilpatrick's motion to restore last year's \$15,000 grant level. In other business, the town will set up more drop boxes for used hypodermic needles, to cut down the number discarded in public place (like the parks).

Works manager Perry Kelly reported that unusual spring weather conditions may make certain town dirt roads impassable for longer than average. The town puts up large signs when roads are closed,; as of now, no roads remain closed.

An additional concern about road maintenance was raised by resident Glen Gaunce, whose car suffered major damage during the March ice storm when, as reported in Bancroft This Week, it was hit after getting stuck in a snowbank. He wanted to know if the town was planning to improve its communication about road conditions and road maintenance during storms. The question will be referred to the Community Safety committee.

Council also learned that preliminary work has begun on the new Snow Road water main, as hook-ups to the plant and the transmission line were installed last week. Works manager Kelly reported that during this work, a shut-off valve failed, leaving the plant at half capacity until a team of divers could make repairs. He noted that the line is gravity-powered; had it been a pressurized line, a major catastrophe would have ensued, resulting in a boil-water emergency. As a result of this work, Kelly reported, he could conclusively state that the old line is wearing out and definitely needs replacement.