

Turnaround year shaping up for business start-ups in Wollaston



By Jim Eadie

The summer of 2015 is shaping up to be a remarkable turnaround year for business start-ups in Wollaston Township, and there is a noticeable sense of expectancy in the air. Partly due to new residents locating in the township, and some new business plans, building permits are way up this year, always a good sign of economic activity. For a municipality looking for economic development to support a sustainable future, Reeve Graham Blair is happy with the new trend.

"We have a welcoming environment here," he said. "We have a hamlet, and a lovely community surrounding it."

Linda Patterson agrees. "People who are coming here are not just looking for a house to live in, they are looking for a home," she said. "People are working hard here to make this community a home."

Patterson and her husband have recently purchased and are renovating a property where they plan to open several new businesses including a music store, juice bar, and used furniture depot. If things work out, the hope is to add a hairdressing establishment as well.

"The women at the township office have been very helpful for us," she added. "They have helped us fill out forms so that things get approved the first time. I hope I don't get them in trouble for saying that!"

"This is the best township I have ever lived in for help that way," said Tia Alexander, owner of the brand new Little Bean Organics. "We think they do a great job there at the township office."

Alexander noted that it is important that the local businesses work together, and support each other as well.

Wollaston Township clerk Jennifer Cohen did not appear to be in any trouble. "I believe that we play a big role at the township office in supporting economic development just by being as helpful as we can, and making sure things get done right," she said. "We will do whatever we can do to assist people."

A quick count reveals well over a dozen new small businesses just open, or in the process of planning to open in time for the summer season. Add this to several dozen already established small businesses in the township, and Coe Hill becomes an even more interesting destination to explore.

Patterson remembered when she was operating the Café in town that she depended on customers who were staying at the Red Eagle or Bear Ridge campgrounds to keep her business operational. She believes that the growing population of small businesses brings campers to the area as well, demonstrating the cooperative nature of business success.

Included in some of the entrepreneurial activities are businesses in woodworking, fabric and yarn, a broad cross section of eateries, bakeries, meat shop, galleries and studios, property maintenance, farmers market, hemp dog toy manufacturer, music teachers, organic and local foods and products, just to name some of them. The hamlet even has a new walk in medical clinic that is open 6 days a week.

Instead of just driving along the main streets, Cohen suggests people are welcome to stop into the Township office just south of

Hwy. 620 on the Wollaston Lake Rd. for business information. The township office staff is always ready to provide, and as well a business directory and bulletin board is maintained at the office.