

Wollaston hires community development co-ordinator

By Jim Eadie

The Township of Wollaston has announced the hiring of a part time community development co-ordinator for the municipality in a serious effort to pull together plans and resources to drive community projects, and engage citizens and businesses to support business and tourism opportunities in the municipality.

‘We are very happy and pleased to welcome Shannon O’Keefe who will be our co-ordinator,’ said municipal clerk Jennifer Cohen. ‘She has already started, and the present contract will go through until the end of December 2017, with 10 flexible hours per week.’ O’Keefe has significant experience in the not-for-profit sector in Ottawa, involved in the staging of festivals and events in Ottawa; in particular, providing human resources and member retention services and presenting workshops for people holding events on effective utilization of social media and grant writing. Currently, she resides in Bancroft, and is a board director for the Bancroft Business Improvement Association.

‘I am very excited about this,’ O’Keefe told *Bancroft This Week*. ‘Straight out of the gate, I hope to engage local residents and businesses to rally, come together, and encourage a sense of pride about what resources we have here.’

Business retention and expansion is also on her list. Even community workshops or seminars covering professional development, funding proposal writing, or volunteer recruitment and retention.

As for the immediate future, planning for Wollaston holiday season activities and events is underway. 2017 Canadian celebrations of 150 years also be an important year for community celebration, tourism and economic development for Wollaston, according to O’Keefe.

On a good note, council has been advised by the OPP that the policing contract cost increase is smaller than expected.

‘Our costs seemed to have stabilized,’ said Cohen. ‘Cost increases are capped at \$40 per household each year. Our increase is only \$3.51 per household. Not the huge effect it was last year. This is good news for us – other municipalities are still at the \$40 per household this year.’

‘What about Hastings County?’ asked Councillor Michael Fuerth. ‘How are they going to approach this?’ (Referring to talk at one time about Hastings County starting up a county police force.)

‘The notion of running your own police service is not there now,’ said Councillor Bob Ireland. ‘Good luck with that.’

Cohen updated council on the steps being taken to terminate the current union library, and create the New Wollaston Township Library effective Jan. 1, 2017.

‘It is a bit of a chicken and egg situation,’ she said. The current board will be dissolved, and the new library will be governed by a new board which is not yet appointed. Council’s responsibility is simply to appoint a board, and approve the budget. Since funding, or the municipal funding amount of funding is up in the air, Cohen suggested a committee of council meet to assess current data and community needs and municipal funding to make recommendations to the new board once it is established. There are also questions about who owns the assets of the library, and if the value of the assets has to be divided between the two estranged municipalities currently overseeing the current library board.

Fuerth and Ireland agreed to meet with one of the municipal office staff as a committee to formulate recommendations for the new board.