

Wollaston questions what services library is providing during COVID-19

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By Kristena Schutt-Moore

Wollaston council was to sign a service agreement with Wollaston Public Library during their council meeting on Monday, April 20. However, the council wanted to know how the library was continuing to provide support to the public during COVID-19. The discussion around what the library was offering was initiated by Councillor Tim Conlin who asked if there was a way to, ?not utilizing the entire funding that we [the council and the library] agreed upon for the entire year.? He explained that the library was, ?going to be down for, they are not sure how many months. That we could maybe withhold some of that payment of \$30,000 a year.? Later in the meeting he explained that he was thinking that the withheld funding would be put in an account for the community hub/library the township is looking into building in the future. He admitted that he wasn't sure what the library was offering but stated that, ?if the work isn't there I don't know why we are paying for a librarian if there is no one at the library.? Both Mayor Barb Shaw and the township clerk Bernice Crocker said that the township is unable to lay off any staff of the library, and that any decisions of that nature would have to come from the library board. Nether Councillor Darlene Colton or Deputy Mayor Lynn Kruger, who are members of the library board answered Coltin's question on what the library and librarian is doing during the COVID-19 pandemic. Kruger did say that the library was locked and the librarian was working from home. According to a press release from the library board sent out earlier in the week before the council meeting, the Wollaston library board said, ?While actual books and DVDs will remain on the shelves for now, the board approved a motion to continue offering patrons access to free online services, including a virtual catalogue, with assistance and support to be provided by CEO/librarian, Temple Cameron.? During the council meeting Shaw said that she herself was using the library's online resources to continue her book reading. She asked Conlin to put a motion forward. His first motion was to suspend funding to the library on a month by month basis that it is closed. This motion did not get put to a vote and the library is not closed, and council believed it was not clear enough. His second motion was to have township staff talk to Cameron and the library board about what services are still being provided and what amount of funding is being used where during the COVID-19 pandemic. The service agreement has been put on hold until township staff bring a report back to council regarding the library resources and services. Council will make a decision on funding and the agreement once the report is presented at a future council meeting.