

Wollaston to write letter of support for trails

By Kristena Schutt-Moore

Cathy Trimble and Dora Yateman of Hastings Destination Trails Inc. have asked Wollaston Council for a letter of support that will be added to grant applications to Infrastructure Canada and partnership with three of their goals. This request was made as part of a delegation to council during the Monday, April 11 meeting. Trimble said that the first goal is collaboration and that the grant request was to create a collaborative work environment for trail partners and stakeholders. The second goal is product development. Funding has been applied for to build relationships with landowners and assist with enhancements and expansions of existing trails and the development of new trails. Trimble described it as, "basically plan the plan." As for the third goal, which is for marketing and communications, HDTI has already received funding from Hastings County to build a profile of the county as a destination for trail activity to contribute to the quality of life while promoting the safe and responsible use of trails. "What this all means is that we have been thrilled with the level of support from many organizations. Backing for the Infrastructure Canada Active Transportation Grant application in the Planing Stream came in the form of 15 enthusiastic support letters including Hastings County and the Nature Conservancy of Canada. This support was garnered for the concept plan through delegations to the Hastings County member municipalities. Which is why we are here today, because you are a member," explained Trimble. She continued on to say that HDTI has received a small development grant from the county already, and they are grateful for that. The work has already been started on Hastings County Rural Transportation and Route Concept Plan. The plan will contain a collection of mandates for the Hastings County Activation Network, as well as rebranding and creating a marketing brands for non-motorized trails network under the name of The Trail of Broken Hearts. If the grant application is successful then HDTI will be able to enhance the existing collaborative working environment in Hastings with new stakeholders for a rural active transportation network development in Hastings County for access and fairness in active transportation network opportunities. Trimble said that active transportation has a number of different meanings in the world, but in the world of municipalities, families and the federal government it is anything that is powered by a human. Traditionally Active transportation funding has been for big cities, for things like putting in bike lanes on roadways. This is the first round of funding that has encompassed trails. She continued on to say that townships within Hastings County have historically struggled to implement active transportation and trails in the region. Part of the issue is the distance between the committees. Trimble said that years ago all the communities were interconnected as people travelled by horse and buggy or even just walked. This area has significant trails operating in isolation, and separated from each other in such as crown reserves, parks, conservation authorities, First Nations lands and one rail trail that serves predominantly motorized use. Trimble said that many of the roads and road right of ways that are used by pedestrians are designed for wheel traffic and in their nature provide little or no safe passage for non-motorised pedestrian travel. And currently there is no passage for pedestrian travel cross country. An example that was given was the walking trails that were put in Stirling-Rawdon. However they aren't connected to the Stirling Theatre, or the local grocery store, library, parks, churches or anything else. Trimble said that that is what their active transportation plan is going to be looking into, "how can we connect all these things and get better involvement.?" These are all the kinds of things we would look at as we try to drive a connected network from Lake Ontario up to Lake St. Peter. Looking at what all those cross notes are, where it makes sense, and where it's safe. What we can open up then are the economic opportunities, tourism initiatives and opportunities to the communities for transportation opportunities," says Trimble. The County of Hastings does not have an active transportation network, and that is what the current grant application is for. In the presentation to council Trimble said that HDTI plans to create a conditions and ground proving planning project will develop a countywide active transportation trails master plan that will be detailed for consumer and public use. Parts of this will include assessing assets, green trails, carbon reduction, use patterns, the needs in the different communitie and more. Trimble said that once created it would be a 15 to 20 year plan that would help all of the 14 municipalities in the county benefit from non-motorized trail use. When the floor was opened to questions Deputy Mayor Darlene Colton asked what HDTI were looking to provide to Wollaston. The answer by Trimble was, "We don't know yet, we want to see what the connectivity is and we would also be looking at things like The Old Hastings road to. Thats what the plan would investigate and we would figure out how we could help out." Deputy Mayor Colton continued on asking, "So are you going to try to get rid of snowmobiling and ATVing then?" To which Trimble said No! I don't think we would attempt to do that. I want to find ways around it." Digging deeper Deputy Mayor Colton continued asking about where they would get the land to do the things. That answer included official plans, road allowances and different municipalities working together. Using the South Connecting Trail in Tyendinaga as an example Trimble said that they know people want to continue that trail north, but they don't know how to get over

the 401 Hwy yet, but that was the sort of problem the plan would help figure out. The next question from Deputy Mayor Colton was, "I feel we have conflict here with Nellie Lunn [Park] as this organization has been giving us input into this situation here and how they want to figure it out so at this point we have a conflict." When Councillor Jeffery Swartman said that there were no actual plans for where the trails were going yet she questioned Trimble saying, "So you're not putting Nellie Lunn into your proposal?" Trimble's answer was, "No, how could I?" In the end it was a unanimous decision by council to add a letter of support from Wollaston council to Hastings Destination Trails Inc.'s grant application to Infrastructure Canada.