

Curb changes coming to fix developer's blunder

By Peter Richardson

Council returned to the issue of the gradient discrepancies on Cook Crescent in the neighbourhoods of Summerhill development on Monday night with a proposed solution that, although not perfect, meets all of the legal and construction standards that are involved.

When the issue was brought to Council in April, the preferred solution by both Council and the residents was to have the roadway reconstructed, lower than it is at present. This solution was based upon the thought that the roadway had been constructed using the wrong survey benchmark and was subsequently too high, which was causing the flooding of homes on the south side of Cooks Crescent. After further investigation, it was determined that, in fact, the roadway was correct, but the homes themselves had been the victims of the erroneous benchmark and were constructed lower than they should have been in relation to the road.

If the Town were to order the road to be lowered, it would have caused potentially serious issues with the existing infrastructure buried beneath the road, not to mention tremendous inconvenience for the existing homeowners.

By lowering the grade of the road, the buried utilities and water and sewer lines would no longer be well beneath the frost line, resulting in the potential for freezing in winter and having them not meet the requirements of the building codes and the utility company standards.

In order to avoid this and solve the issue it was decided by Council, and recommended by the Town engineers, S. Burnett and Associates Limited, that the existing curbs be torn up and replaced by a semi-mountable curb with a regular gutter and that the previously suggested asphalt strip, along the boulevard, be excluded.

It was determined that although said strip would protect the boulevard from possible damage from snow plowing, it was an eyesore and was definitely not wanted by the residents.

Mayor Bennington expressed his regrets over the necessity of this solution, rather than lowering the roadway, but agreed with Council that it would cause the least disruption for the residents, while meeting all the requirements of the situation, while avoiding future problems, such as frozen water mains along the roadway.

The Mayor and several councillors did, however, express their dismay and dislike that although this was totally an error on the part of the developer, Vandyk, there was no apparent avenue by which the Town could hold them accountable, beyond the replacement of the curbs. Unlike doctors, lawyers or other organizations, there presently exists no governing body for developers.

The next odourous issue for Council was, not surprisingly, the odour emanating from the holding ponds at the treatment plant. As residents are aware, the problem has sometimes abated, but it has not gone away!

At issue is the extremely heavy rains seen this spring, which have raised the water levels in the ponds to previously unseen levels. Normally, at this time of year, they would be empty, but not currently. After an evaluation by S. Burnett and Associates and Aqua, the company contracted to run the facility, it was determined that, for the present, the solution is to remove all of the sludge, read sewage, from the bottom of the tanks, as soon as it is dry enough to do so. This will, in effect, deepen the tanks and help to prevent what is currently happening.

CAO John Telfer explained that this is usually done every few years and was budgeted to be done next year, but the Town has moved up that schedule due to the current circumstances.

The ponds have two working zones within them. The upper most zone is referred to as the aerobic zone, where the contents are

exposed to the air and it is normally basically odourless. The lower zone is the anaerobic zone and it is here that the sludge resides and it is here that all the hydrogen sulphide gas is produced.

Currently, due to the depth of water in the ponds, these two zones are merging and that is what is causing the problem. With the removal of the sludge, much of the gas will also cease to be produced and the odour should not happen.

This Phase One of the solution, will be conducted in late summer or early September, at a cost of some \$150,000.00.

It was noted, however, that like many problems, this one will get worse before it gets better, especially when the sludge is disturbed during removal.

There will be a Phase Two, which would involve raising the level of the berms surrounding the ponds and, later, a Phase Three as part of an Environmental Assessment of the entire operation.