

OPSB chair hints to future partnership with Shelburne police

Written By MIKE PICKFORD

The Orangeville Police Service (OPS) is not currently in negotiations to expand its services into neighbouring municipalities, says Ken Krakar, Orangeville Police Services Board (OPSB) chair.

Following up on a query by Councillor Sylvia Bradley at a recent meeting of Orangeville Council, the Orangeville Citizen asked Mr. Krakar if there were any truth to rumours that negotiations between Orangeville and both Shelburne and Amaranth were ongoing. While he answered with a resounding "No" regarding official negotiations, he admitted tentative conversations had taken place with Shelburne officials.

"I can confirm that the Board is not in open discussions with any municipality regarding amalgamation," Mr. Krakar said. "I have had a conversation with the Chair of the Shelburne Police Services Board to discuss if there is any appetite for future partnerships."

With the Town of Shelburne currently embroiled in an OPP costing proposal, Mayor Ken Bennington has indicated discussions relating to a potential regional police force will have to wait until that process has concluded.

During the debate over its own OPP costing proposal, Orangeville Council faced several claims that the OPS was not efficient, something that hit the local board hard.

"The Board took this statement very seriously and in turn formed an efficiencies committee with a mandate to report back to the Board on their findings," Mr. Krakar said. "Although the Board is confident that the Service is run in an efficient manner, such as having a zero percent budget increase in each of the last four years, this committee has been exploring several avenues to find if there are any further efficiencies in reducing the taxpayer burden."

Coun. Bradley, who last year voted in favour of dissolving the OPS and adopting the OPP, took Mayor Jeremy Williams to task on May 28 regarding rumours the OPSB was actively shopping its services, against the wishes of Council.

"I'm perplexed as to why the chair is talking to someone about amalgamation when they have not been given permission to do so? I thought it was made clear that this wasn't going to happen," Ms. Bradley said.

After a brief back and forth, Mayor Williams noted that the board was free to pursue different avenues long as it serves and follows the organization's mandate. Despite that, he told Coun. Bradley that "nothing is currently being done".

While that may be the case at present, Mr. Krakar at the very least hinted the board would like to see discussions with Shelburne take place should the municipality decide not to sign a contract with the OPP.

"Once we understand where they are going, we can perhaps, on both Councils' approval, look at a partnership scenario. This is simply due diligence on our part. We are gathering all the information so that Council can make an informed decision," Mr. Krakar said.

He concluded, "The Orangeville Police Services Board is looking to see if we can find synergies with any neighbouring municipalities as this would be a win-win for the taxpayers and the municipality."