

DC bylaw passes, mayor vehemently opposed

Shelburne council Monday adopted its 5-year Development Charges bylaw in a recorded 3-1 vote, with only Mayor Ed Crewson in opposition to the motion.

Councillors Walter Benotto, Randy Chambers and Tom Egan were in support of the motion to adopt the bylaw with minor adjustments that had been approved a week earlier. The adjustments had raised the previously proposed residential DC by \$12, to \$14,009. The current residential DC, until March 16, is \$20,245.

On the surface, the new bylaw militates against industrial/commercial (ICI) developers. The square footage charge will become \$4.11, up from the current \$2.29, but Mr. Grunda had told a recent meeting that the council could waive 50% for any class of ICI developers, if it so chose.

Deputy Mayor Ken Bennington and Councillors A.J. Cavey and Geoff Dunlop were absent for the vote.

The attendance by only four of the town's seven council members, just enough for a quorum, is a rare but not unheard of occurrence for Shelburne.

In this case, however, it might have placed the mayor in the embarrassing position of having to sign a bylaw to which he was vehemently opposed because he believes the bylaw will result in an unfair capital burden of \$6-million being placed on the shoulders of existing property owners when it rightly belongs on new developments.

In an interview Tuesday, Mayor Crewson acknowledged that he might have passed the signing to the deputy mayor, had the deputy been present. As the signing authority, I don't want to be seen as a \$6-million mayor a few years from now, he said.

He said the town would be facing about \$18-million of capital costs over the next five years, and argues that those are mainly growth-related. "We have \$1.8-million (of DCs) now. That leaves \$16-million to be collected. New DCs would generate \$10-million, so I'm afraid we would have \$6-million left for taxpayers to pay."

Not everyone agrees with the mayor. Councillor Chambers, a professional accountant, said last week that consultant Andrew Grunda of Watson & Associates had prepared a good report.

Mayor Crewson says he has no criticism of councillors with opposing views, but would have liked confirmation that the DCs are the right ones. He says he would have liked confirmation, and that if he had had a second Monday, he would have introduced a motion for a peer review of the Watson report. He said he had already checked with Hemson Consulting Ltd., and had been given a quote of \$10,000 and a timeline of 30 to 60 days.

The timeline would have meant the town would have been without authority to collect DCs for at least a month but there could have been a moratorium on building permits in the interim.

DCs are meant to allocate capital costs of improvements on the basis of those required for existing population and those required for expansion.

As examples, water mains might be adequate for the existing population but too small for the expansion. Fire services, library, water supplies, sewage services and recreational facilities, among others, would have to be expanded for a growing population.

Among such other things, the mayor pointed out in the interview that municipal partners in the fire board have been paying about 52% of fire department costs, including capital.

But, he said, the town is expected to have 70% of assessment, population and possibly fire calls. As the fire agreement is reviewed

annually, he said the partners in that circumstance are unlikely to be happy to continue paying 52%.

The fire board is looking at the need for eight additional firefighters which will entail about \$1?million of capital costs for equipment and firehall expansion.

On that basis, he said, the DC should reflect 70% rather than 48% of the new capital costs.

By Wes Keller