

New warden sets ambitious course for 2014

Dufferin County's new warden, Mayor Bill Hill of Melancthon, is determined to tie up loose ends at both the county and at his home township, and he is unfazed by the fact that 2014 is an election year as well.

‘It makes no difference,’ he said in a phone interview. ‘There’s a job to be done. We have to get on with it.’

But election year does make a difference. Generally speaking, county council and the eight local councils in the municipalities the county comprises all become ‘lame ducks’ as of nomination day, Sept. 12.

This would leave only about nine months in which to make major decisions although the provincial lame duck rules are somewhat complex on the issue.

As well, the September meeting of county council is on the 11th, on the eve of the final day for filing nomination papers.

What are the major tasks to be undertaken at the county level between now and Lame Duck Day?

Warden Hill views the county Official Plan as vital, and notes that it is required to be completed by provincial edict.

The proposals for the OP, which don't appear to take any powers away from the lower tier, are most likely satisfactory to the eight local municipalities. But county council has to find ways to get around the weighted vote for future decisions on the plan.

For the remainder of this term, Orangeville representatives exercise 12 of 29 votes at the county, which mean they would need support from only three additional ones to control the outcome. Both Mono and Shelburne have three or more votes.

However, that ratio could also change, depending on the number of eligible voters in each municipality. Orangeville lost one vote at the beginning of the current term.

Warden Hill said he would like to see the problem of DEEP (Dufferin Eco Energy Park) resolved within this term. For the time being at least, the Alter NRG gasification proposal is dead through lack of interested users and investors, and the York Region composter proposal appears problematic at least while the Region is completing its garbage processing facilities.

County council and Melancthon are facing an overlapping problem: the 230 kv transmission line from the Dufferin Wind Power site to the Orangeville substation.

Now the Environmental Review Tribunal has upheld approvals for the wind farm, including the power line ? and DWP has its ?leave to construct? from the Ontario Energy Board.

It is too early to tell if the ERT decision will be appealed, but Warden Hill said in a phone interview that Premier Kathleen Wynn had said there would be no extensions to construction deadlines, and the DWP deadline has already passed.

With respect to the power line, the warden and the council will have to decide how to proceed with negotiations. DWP is already seeking to expropriate an easement for the line.

Wind turbines, it appears, are here to stay. The warden said he wants to involve the wind companies in a new scholarship program in which the county would fund five scholarships of \$5,000 each and to have the wind companies match the funding.

Warden Hill said he wants to take a more active role in the Western Wardens Caucus and its proposal for super high-speed broadband connectivity which it says is vital to the prosperity of the region. The caucus has engaged Campbell Patterson Communications to complete a study.

By Wes Keller