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Sewage odour continues to raise stink at Council

By Peter Richardson

This issue of the odour emanating from the Town's sewage lagoons once again reared its head at Monday night's Council meeting, with Councillor Wade Mills suggesting that perhaps a new ?official statement? on the matter might be in order, as he and others were receiving numerous inquiries.

Mayor Ken Bennington noted that he had recently attempted to assuage fears on the Town's Facebook page as well.

CAO John Telfer responded to concerns, explaining that the Town was in constant contact with the system operators and was fully on top of the situation.

The Ministry of the Environment has officially declared that there was no health risk to the public with the odour. The problem has arisen solely due to the excessive run-off of ground water caused by the unusually wet spring.

CAO Teller explained that, because the lagoons are full at the moment, there is little more that the Town can do. Normally at this time of year the lagoons are empty, but this year is an exception.

Addressing concerns that perhaps the system was too small to handle Shelburne's needs, he assured Council that this was not the case. Treatment facilities are gauged according to the out flow, or discharge levels, from the facility and not by the input levels. Shelburne's plant is beyond adequate for the town's needs.

Basically, there is a limit, as to how much the facility can draw down the lagoons daily and still process the other incoming effluent.

To provide an example of what is happening, Telfer explained that before the recent rainfall, the lagoons held 3,100 cubic metres of effluent. Following the rain, the level sat above 7,000 cubic metres!

Telfer went on to explain that once the lagoons are dry, the Town plans to clean out the accumulated sludge in the reservoirs and raise the level of the berms which encompass them. In addition, they will plant numerous trees on these new berms. This will facilitate stopping much of the wind that passes over the lagoons and hence disperses the odours. The trees would also serve to block potential odours from being distributed.

In the interim, the public should be aware that the plant, its filters, and all of its equipment, are functioning normally and are in no way compromised.

Meanwhile, it might be worth remembering, that Shelburne is a rural community and as such, can expect rural occurrences, such as odours.

BACKYARD FIRES

Council next revisited the subject of open air containment for backyard fires.

Chief Lemaich was in attendance to reassess his recent draft regulations governing such fires, which he first presented to Council earlier in the year.

Questions primarily had been raised regarding the size and types of containers acceptable and the times for allowed burning.

Councillor Dan Sample pointed out that, in his research, regarding commercially available fire containers, only one met the current suggested maximum of 24? x 24? and that perhaps the chief would consider enlarging that size.

The Chief responded that he saw no immediate problem with that suggestion, but that he did not want excessively large containers being used, as this raised a definite safety issue with travelling embers.

Larger containers lead to larger fires which, in turn, could produce more smoke and also embers and sparks, all of which could prove hazardous to surrounding property.

In the end, Council voted to accept the regulations as received, pending and amendment regarding the maximum size and to then incorporate them into the Town By-Law, in a subsequent amendment, in time for the next council meeting. In the interim, the regulations are to be used as a guideline for the general public.

BOULEVARD CAFES

Next up, was a request from Robert Costelloe of Fiddleheads Pub to have Council grant him permission to establish a Boulevard Cafe in front of his restaurant.

His proposal, is to utilize the now unused portion of the sidewalk boulevard to establish an outdoor seating area for approximately 18 patrons. The patio would be fenced and all furniture would be removed after closing each evening.

A wide swath of public sidewalk, would be unaffected, so as to provide normal pedestrian travel.

Mr. Costelloe explained that such installations were increasingly popular with the public and that although called a ?pub?, Fiddleheads was not a tavern and that at present some 73 per cent of their revenues are derived from food sales exclusively.

He pointed out that, in other venues, it has been noted that such installations have proven to encourage more use of the downtown areas and have enhanced business in general, not simply that of the patio owner.

Council was unanimously in favour of such an enterprise coming to Shelburne, provided that, ?all the ducks were in a row ? in so far as regulations, by-laws and safety issues were concerned.

Since Shelburne has never had such an application, or patio, in the past, both Council and Mr. Costelloe see this as seeding new ground, for the town and both expect it to be a work in progress as time goes on. Both parties expect to see considerable give and take from both sides, as the issue progresses.

Robert would like to see the patio licensed under the LLBO and expects to work with Town staff to establish the rules for the venture. Council voted to accept the delegation and to forward it to Town staff to work out the details.

In other business, Fat Boy Fireworks was granted permission for a short term business licence to sell their wares, Troupe Adore was given permission to utilize Jack Downing Park free of charge and Council unanimously voted against allowing the OSPCA from holding it's Tag Days Fundraiser at the Shelburne LCBO. It was felt that since the OSPCA does not fully support Shelburne's needs for animal control, it was not prudent to allow them to raise money in the community, when none of that money stays in, nor benefits, Shelburne .