

Ratepayers' group looks at Cramahe budget

COLBORNE CHRONICLE

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With tax increases and mill rates on many people's minds, the Cramahe Ratepayers' Association asked two of its members to look at the Cramahe Budget for 2004. They hoped to identify any significant increases to the Township budget, identify any significant issues, and raise questions to present to Township Treasurer, Mora Chatterson.

The results of the study completed by Ken Kelly and Meredyth Young was presented to the association last Thursday.

Conventions and Professional Development numbers were outlined and questioned in the report.

Ms. Young identified for the ratepayers several areas where the Township had gone over and under budget in these sections of the budget in 2003. She included the amounts budgeted for 2004.

Conferences and Professional Development costs are separated into departments,

with each Township department having a separate budget. Council and the Township administration also have a separate budget from the staff.

Four groups went over budget last year.

The administration budgeted \$7,500 for conventions last year and \$7,000 for professional development. They spent \$10,547 and \$15,801 in the two categories. The Building Department was also over budget, but by smaller amounts. It was \$434 over its \$1,500 conventions budget and \$1,135 over its \$500 professional development projection for 2003.

The Police Service Board had nothing allotted for professional development but spent \$438. It was \$1,239 under budget in the other category.

The fourth department to go over was the Roads Administration which was \$999 over its \$3,000 professional development figure. It was under budget by \$1,000 in the conventions category.

Council spent less than half its convention budget of \$8,000 last year. Other departments were also significantly under

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budget. The Cramahe Fire department was under its professional development number by \$2,030. There was \$2,500 set aside for Sanitary Sewer System professional development. None was spent. Similarly, the Heritage Cramahe and the Cramahe Library Board did not spend their allotments.

In total \$25,500 is budgeted for conventions and seminars. Another \$26,800 is budgeted for professional development. This represents 1.5 per cent of the Cramahe budget.

With the numbers in place, Ms. Young put forth the committee's questions.

They wondered what the Township's policy is when it goes over budget in one of these categories. Do they go over budget or are the costs paid in the subsequent year?

They wondered what the advantage is to Cramahe to have its Chief Administrative Officer a consultant. The committee assumed it would be less expensive to the

Township, but did not know.

In the subsequent discussion period it was asked why the CAO is paid to go to conferences when he is a consultant. No one in the group could answer.

In the "Other Expenses" column of the budget, \$25,600 was budgeted for administration, and \$32,345 was spent. They wondered what these expenses were.

There was no budget last year for land acquisition, but \$60,522 was spent in 2003. This year there is a budget of \$30,000.

The committee would also like to have the Treasurer explain why policing costs went up by 21 per cent this year.

Ms. Young and Mr. Kelly were on the record stating that their questions do not reflect a lack of trust. They would simply like the question explained.

In her preliminary comments Ms. Young noted that they did not find the budget user friendly. Numbers were difficult to break down.

Mr. Kelly will request a meeting with Mrs. Chatterson to discuss the Ratepayers' questions.

Builders face possible big increase in development fees

COLBORNE

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The Township of Cramahe has released a study it commissioned to evaluate development charges levied on new construction in the municipality. The study is required every five years, by provincial law.

The study, done by Tunnock Consulting Ltd. of North Bay, recommends Cramahe Township increase its development charges for new homes in the village of Colborne from the current \$2,800 to a new rate of \$10,194.67 - an increase of 342 per cent. In rural areas the charge would increase from \$1,000 to \$2,398.13 - an increase of 239 per cent.

At present, non-residential building is not assessed a development charge. Under the proposed plan, those buildings would be charged \$0.879 per square foot in rural areas. Builders would also pay a water charge of \$6,896.55 for every 1,000 litres of projected daily water use, to cover wastewater costs; another \$735.63 for every 1,035 litres of projected daily water flow to cover water storage costs if the buildings are built in the urban area.

Non-residential development includes commercial, industrial, and farm buildings. Expansion which is less than 50 per cent of the existing building is not charged a development fee. Also exempted are garages, storage buildings, garden sheds, swimming pools and any non-residential building less than 107.6 square feet (10 square metres).

The study looks at five areas of local costs and the anticipated need for extra services because of new development. By estimating the growth and the associated costs, the study proceeds to establish how much each new resident and business will pay.

The areas studied are transportation, wastewater treatment, water storage, recreation and cultural services, and capital studies.

The Tunnock study states that there will be \$93,000 of rural road upgrading over the next five years, and a \$455,000 addition to the Public Works Complex projected for 2008. The combined cost to each new homeowner would be \$1,065.

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Looking at other possibilities, Mayor Dekeyser is hoping that the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing will look favourably on grants for the major expansion which will service an additional 870 homes, doubling Colborne's sewage capacity. He hopes to convince Northumberland MPP, Lou Rinaldi that even if there is no immediate increase in need in Colborne, there will be increased demand for treatment when sewage from septic tanks is treated. That is expected sometime in the near future. Mr. Dekeyser thinks that an increased sewage treatment plant could service the municipalities of Brightham and Alwick/Haldimand which lie on either side of Cramahe. They could bring their sewage to Cramahe for treatment. The Mayor says, "We are filled up to the brim now and must convince the province that we are a prime candidate for funding. If we're going to get one kick at the cat, let's get the biggest cat" (and not ask for funding for smaller capital projects). The Mayor feels the Township can handle the costs of water delivery, but won't be able to afford the Keeler Centre, the replacement water tower and a new sewage treatment plant. Without grants or a partnership with another municipality, he feels that Cramahe is just dreaming. With a two-thirds grant, the Mayor says, Cramahe will be in the driver's seat, controlling the project.

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