

Cramahe has new dog bylaw

By BOB OWEN
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One month after Cramahe council began looking at animal control for 2006, it has a deal. In a resolution passed at its December 6 meeting council also approved a new animal bylaw which will govern dogs in the township. A new contract with Shelter of Hope Animal Shelter is pending.

On November 1 council authorized Bylaw Officer Jim Harris to research all aspects of animal control and housing.

When Cramahe's arrangement with a private contractor ended in the spring of 2005 the township entered into a six-month contract with the shelter and with Quinte West Animal Control. When the suggestion of renewal was put forward at Cramahe council on November 1, Councillor Ed Van Egmond balked at the cost. The bill to Cramahe for the five months prior to November was \$4,591.21. It worked out to \$459 for every dog picked up in the township.

Further documentation from the township received by the Chronicle last Wednesday revealed that \$12,388 has been spent as of December 7, 2005. This is significantly less than the \$17,551 cost of animal control and housing in 2004.

In a phone interview last Friday, Mr. Harris outlined the steps he had taken prior to making his recommendation to council on December 6.

Mr. Harris explained that erecting an animal shelter in the township was not on. The cost of a building would be in the neighbourhood of \$150,000 if township-owned land was used. An urban location is not suitable but there is suitable land in rural areas to place a building. But Cramahe's two potential partners, Brighton and Trent Hills rejected the cost of the building and the

estimated \$83,000 a year to run it.

After passing that idea up, Mr. Harris looked at operating our own animal control and using someone else's building for housing.

That was rejected too when the startup cost came in at about \$60,000. Neither Trent Hills nor Brighton wanted to share the cost, or the additional employee.

Improved service

Mr. Harris then moved to see if he could get an improvement in service.

In the contract which is expiring, Cramahe has animal control from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. five days a week.

Cramahe Township veterinarian Dr. Michelle Chiunti has publicly expressed her concerns about the deficiencies of the current contract. Stray dogs are often located after hours. There is no publicized number to call and no service in off hours. Unable to find anyone to call, people call the vets.

It was her opinion that the township has been paying an exorbitant amount for poor or nonexistent service. There has been no coverage for two-thirds of every weekday and none on weekends. As far as the vet was concerned, private citizens can't be expected to catch stray dogs and take them all the way to the Shelter of Hope. If they did, they were the ones doing the animal control.

In the two-year contract which Mr. Harris has negotiated with Richard Lamoureux there will be service 24 hours a day seven days a week. When animals are reported during evening hours, Mr. Lamoureux will determine whether the pick up can wait until the next day. He will maintain a 1-800 number and a van with a sign on it identifying him as the animal control officer.

This goes some way in answering the concerns expressed by Dr. Chiunti in her November 17 interview with the Chronicle.

The cost of augmented service will be slightly more than what was paid in the past six months, but when it all plays out, Mr. Harris hopes the overall cost will be lower than in 2005.

No cats wanted

The contract does not answer another of the vet's concerns.

She is unhappy that the townships of Cramahe, Brighton and Trent Hills are unwilling to do anything regarding cat control. Politicians from these townships refuse to "recognize that the cat is a domestic animal that needs service," commented Dr. Chiunti in the November 17 interview at her clinic. They can be as big a nuisance as dogs. She was told by the Cramahe bylaw officer that people see dogs as more of a threat so they are more ready to deal with them.

Mr. Harris confirmed his opinion that cats are not as big a threat as dogs.

In his research he found no municipality in Northumberland has a bylaw governing cats. Clarington has a bylaw but does not enforce it.

Speaking to concerns expressed in the community regarding standards at the Haven on the Hill cat shelter, the Cramahe Bylaw Officer is convinced, if there were a cat bylaw, the cat shelter on Parliament Street in Colborne would not contravene it. If one were instituted the owner, Linda Hopley would need a kennel licence, adding to her costs. He added the Ontario Humane Society has been to her shelter and accepted it with some changes. Mr. Harris acknowledged Ms. Hopley is trying to do the decent thing and a bylaw would not address the cat shelter issue.

We're not going to take it, county says of OMERS

By Cecilia Nasmith
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Northumberland County councillors have served notice on the province: they will not accept the administrative or financial responsibilities of the next big download.

Responsibility for the Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System (OMERS) is about to be shifted and, for county councillors, it's the last straw. With second reading done and the legislation expected to become law before the next county-council meeting, Alnwick-Haldimand Township Mayor Bill Finley's motion to serve notice was passed last week.

The amount it would put on to local taxpayers' bills, the last Mr. Finley heard, was eight to 10 per cent.

"It's not enough to download it, but they tried to put in all these enhancements," he added.

Cobourg Mayor Peter Delanty noted the provision that allowed retirement after 25 years for essential-services personnel.

"It's the add-ons that really concern me," Mr. Delanty said. "The worst-case scenario for the county is a \$1.2-million addition. I'm sure you have done the math for your municipalities, but for the Town of Cobourg, it's an added \$435,000."

As for standing up to the province to make the point, Trent Hills Mayor Hector Macmillan urged council to consider the

ramifications. It amounts to putting yourself on the line, he said.

"I am there, but I just hope by passing the resolution we will back it up to the end," Mr. Macmillan said. "Or it will be the last one I'm going to back up. I have made this speech enough."

"If you believe in something, you are going to do it," Mr. Finley reasoned. "And I think we have reached that step. I am prepared to take the implications."

"I can tell you, the citizens are not going to accept it," he said. "It's time we said to the province, 'You're living in a dream world. We are not going to take it.'"

"I feel exactly the same way," Cramahe Township Mayor Lee Dekeyser concurred. "It's time to stand up and be counted for our constituents."

"We are doing the work of the province. Why are we being penalized? I don't call it downloading anymore — I call it a dictatorship."

"I encourage my fellow councillors to vote in favour and not to fear," Mr. Macmillan said. "They may break us and they may kill us, but they are not going to eat us."

"I just visited Warkworth (correctional facility), and I saw some pretty good cells down there," Hamilton Township Mayor Forrest Rowden said. "I think I could take one of them."

Mr. Macmillan suggested circulating the motion to all Ontario municipalities for their information and support.