

Mutton Bridge repair options go before the public

CULBORN CHRONICLE

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Residents got their first glimpse of the options available for the opening of Mutton Bridge at an open house hosted by the Township of Cramahe in Castleton Town Hall May 28.

Wayne Patterson of G. D. Jewell Engineering provided several design variations for a small crowd made up of equal parts politicians, municipal staff and residents.

Mr. Patterson's two alternative widths for the deck — five metres or 5.5 metres — drew the most discussion.

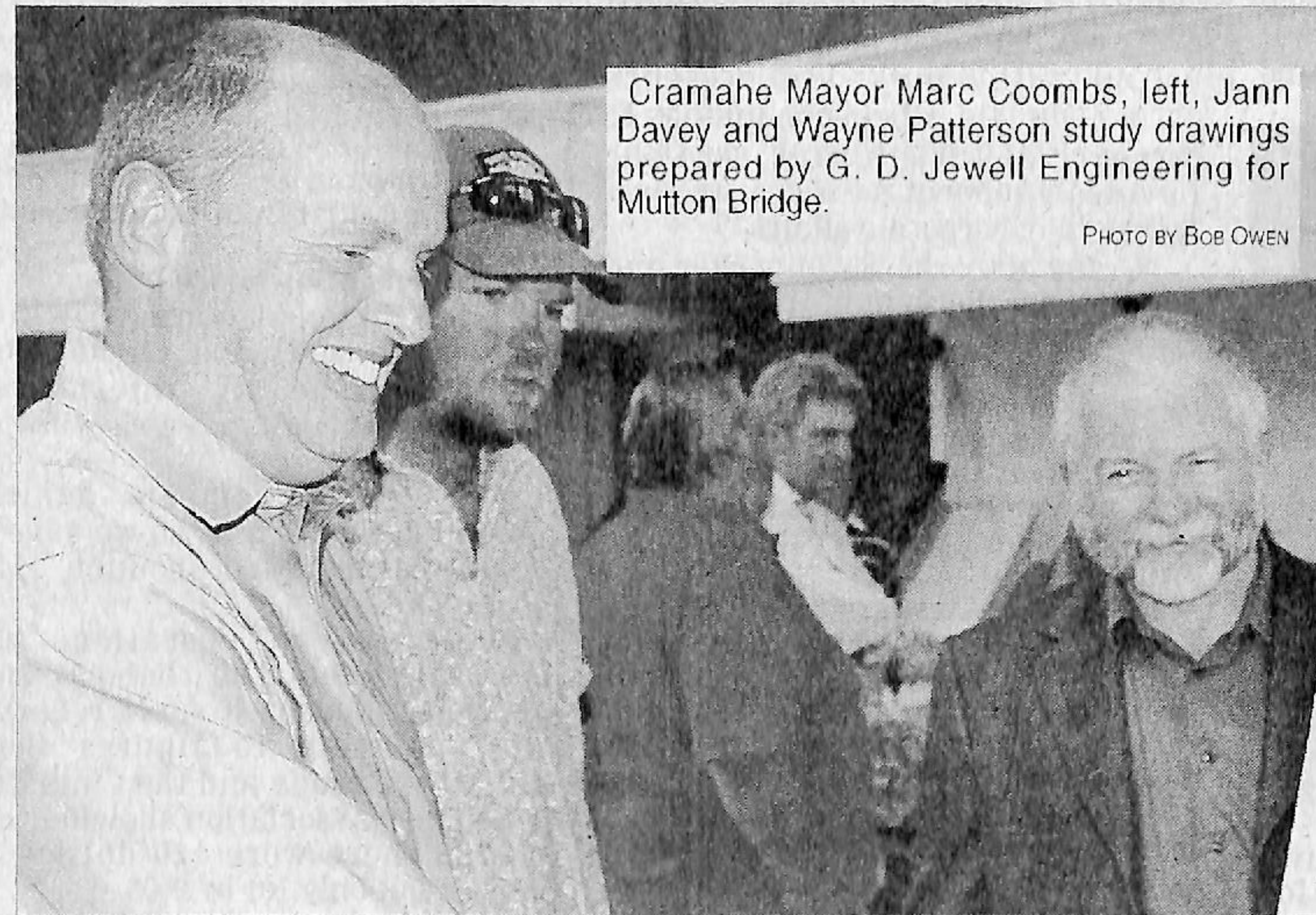
Most of the residents who took in the formal presentation were not from agricultural families and seemed to be in general support of the proposed widths.

The informal discussions which followed produced some concerns.

A 5.5-metre deck would accommodate some of the larger farm vehicles which use the north-south route. Some of the newer combines with 20-foot wheel bases will not make it across the proposed options.

In order to make it wide enough for the combines, the abutments under the bridge would have to be widened to accommodate the approaches. Mr. Patterson was not able to make a close estimate of the additional cost involved in widening the deck to 20 feet, but offered that it might cost close to 50 per cent more.

Under current plans, the federal and provincial governments are tossing in a total of \$280,000 and Cramahe is using \$140,000 from provincial gas tax money to



Cramahe Mayor Marc Coombs, left, Jann Davey and Wayne Patterson study drawings prepared by G. D. Jewell Engineering for Mutton Bridge.

PHOTO BY BOB OWEN

pay its portion of the bill.

Mr. Patterson gave two variations for guard rails in an attempt to accommodate the need to see over the sides to the river below. Low sides can be used because the bridge is on a low-volume road. Both options are higher than the current rail which does not meet the current Canadian Highway Bridge Code.

There were three possible deck surfaces on offer — concrete on girders, reinforced concrete and timber. Reinforced concrete seemed to be the only one which was

designed to accommodate the moving of the underlying dam stoplogs.

His presentation produced spirited discussion.

Most people in attendance expressed their frustration over the bridge's closing. If the comments of Mayor Marc Coombs are any indication, they won't have to wait

any longer than absolutely necessary.

The Jewell proposals and the comments received at the meeting will help council form its decision at its June 5 meeting. The mayor expects a decision to be made there. The engineering firm will be asked to draw up specifications and the job will be put out to tender by the end of June if the mayor has his way. That process should take pace in July. Once a company has been chosen by council to do the work it will take eight-to-ten weeks for the work to be done.

If all goes according to plan, the bridge in its new format should be open sometime this fall.

Mutton Bridge has been closed since August 2006 when an engineering study revealed structural flaws in the supports for the deck. The closure left the township with two north-south arteries south from Castleton and caused disruption to farm operations, bus and commuter routes.

No work was done while the township awaited the results of its application under the federal/provincial COMRIF grant program. Early in 2007 it was announced Cramahe had been successful in its grant bid, and the engineering design options study was commissioned.

When the bridge deck is reconstructed, it will sit about one metre upstream from where it is now, so that it is centred on the abutments underneath. It will support full highway loads.

Mutton bridge owner must agree

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The bridge has always been a dual-purpose structure with the dam underneath.

There was been a mill there since 1850 when William Coon set up shop with a dam and a bridge. The mill provided the wood for many of the homes in the surrounding area.

In 1884, the bank took over the mill, then sold it to Edward Mutton. He passed it on in 1908 to his son Wally, who owned it for 58 years before the Bells purchased the mill

and surrounding land and home.

At one time, Wally Mutton owned the entire unassumed road from Tobacco Road to the corner locals know as Feeny Corner.

In 1952, he sold Mill Hill for \$300 to Cramahe Township. At the same time, he sold the road to the south which connected with Penryn Road. The section from the mill sluice north to Tobacco Road remained in Wally Mutton's hands until the 1966 sale.

— BOB OWEN



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