

New school site up to trustees

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There were Power Point presentations, prepared speeches, ad lib commentaries, all supporting the site of choice.

For Castleton representatives, the overwhelming theme was the strength of the local village community, its heritage buildings, sites and services. The Castleton Playing Fields located next to the current school site were noted as value-added for playground, sports and community events.

For Williams site proponents, proximity to population, potential for water and future sewage connection and no disruption of either school's accommodations while new construction proceeded, were cited.

But, in the end, the committee members remained at their Mar. 3 stalemate. There was no consensus for any one site.

"You are asking the wrong questions," retired elementary school teacher Karen Bammert told the meeting. Requesting to be the last to speak during the public comment segment of the meeting, Ms. Bammert said she has been through four school amalgamations and the actual site of a new school is the least important issue.

"The kids will find their own way," she assured, suggesting students from both elementary schools should be meeting together now to discuss new school colours, plans fundraisers for school trips and projects and build for a new school community.

For the adults, Ms. Bammert said they should be focussing on what facilities they want in a new school — a music room, where coat hooks will be located — that will benefit the school population.

"I will prepare the final report for review and then presentation to the trustees," Ms. Summersides said, thanking committee members and the greater community for being considerate and respectful.

Michelle White said, "I don't believe it will come down to 'your school, my school', Our kids already play hockey together, figure skate together. If we model this transition as a very positive think, I think our kids are going to be okay."

Cramahe Twp. Mayor Marc Coombs requested the committee's report to the trustees indicate, "that we will support their decision. As long as the school ends up in Cramahe Twp., we will support their decision. The community will support the board's decision and support the location of the school wherever it ends up."

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OVER 30 YEARS OF SERVICE TO COLBORNE AND CRAMAHE

Jim Black retires

By Bob Owen
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After 30 years in the service of Colborne and now Cramahe Township, Jim Black retires at the end of this month.

Jim started back in 1977, but he worked a year for the village before he was actually hired.

He and wife Marilyn were living over the McGlennon Insurance offices, paying \$145 a month — heat included — when Keith Clark asked him to shovel some snow for the township. It made sense. Jim laid block and there was less to do in the cold months. He planned to stay the winter, shovel in hand, and go back to the blocks in the spring.

When Mr. Clark said he could stay as a labourer when the winter ended, after close to six months on the job, Jim asked if there were any benefits on the job. That was the push needed; Jim was hired officially Jan. 1, 1978. He joined Mr. Clark, Neil Black and Ernie Kemp on the village of Colborne works staff.

The village continues to be served by three public works employees, now part of the amalgamated Township of Cramahe.

August 1983, the new Colborne sewage treatment plant opened. Jim was in charge — not bad for a guy who was turning 30. He became village foreman and remained in that position until Dec. 2003 when Merlin Dewing became Chief Administrative Officer for the amalgamated Cramahe Township and a Director of Public Works was hired. Cramahe council's support of him during those difficult days stands as one of the highlights of the municipal career of the soft-spoken man with the easy smile. He is still deeply appreciative of all the community support at the time. There was much more than he thought there might be.

The community feeling shouldn't be surprising. Jim Black was seen many times on weekends doing the little extras to improve the appearance of the community.

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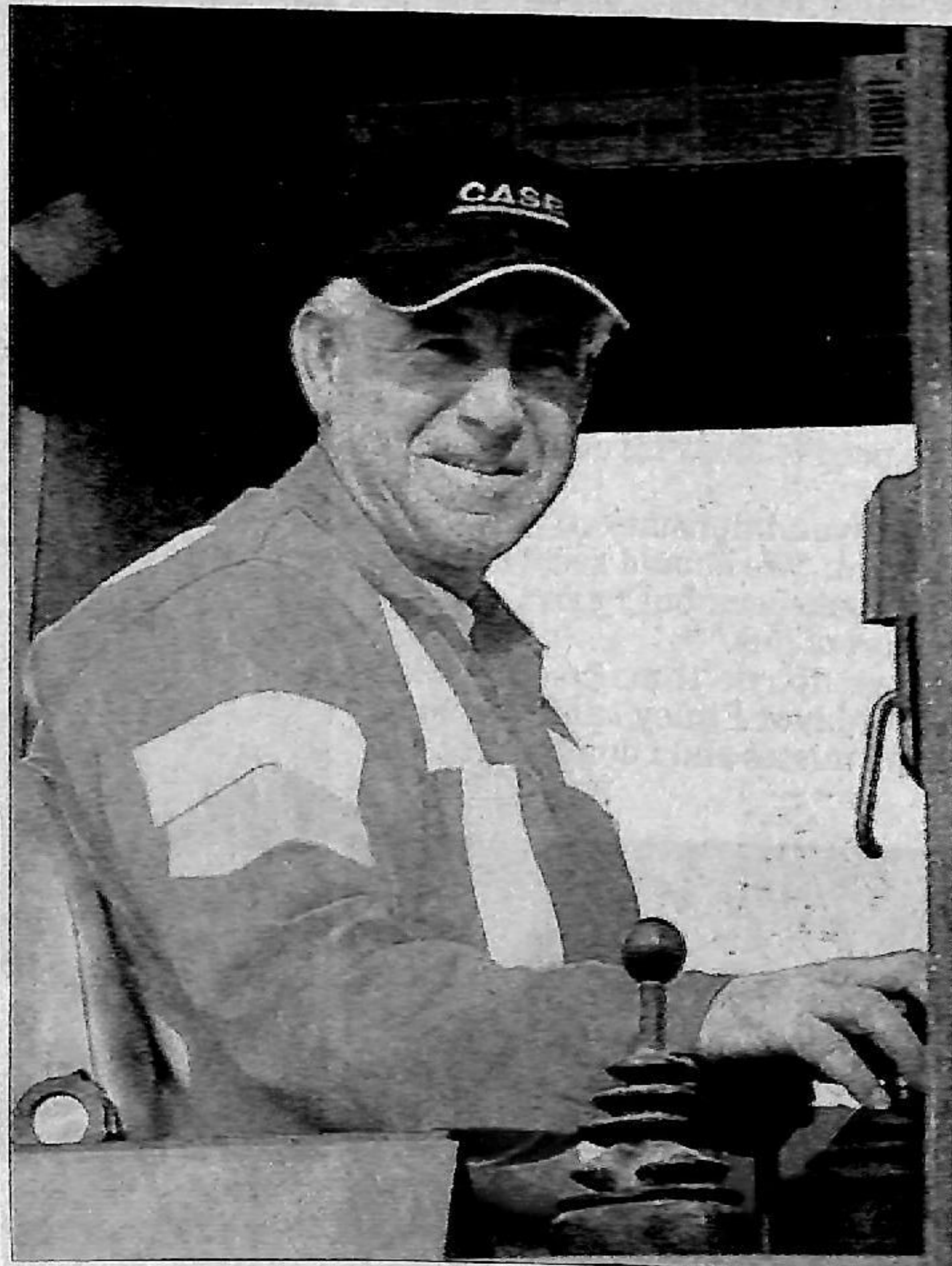


PHOTO BY BOB OWEN

At home on a front end loader — but not for long. Jim Black's 30-year run as a township employee ends Apr. 30.

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