

News

Brighton vote rejects opting for countywide OPP

By JACK EVANS
Special to the Chronicle

If Brighton residents have occasion to complain about tax rates over the next few years, they will know who to call, following council's decision Monday night not to support moving policing to the county level.

The recorded vote, as requested by Coun. Mike Vandertoorn, one of the staunch opponents to the move, denied the move on a 4-3 basis. The three others who voted nay were Councillors Brian Ostrander, Craig Kerr and Emily Rowley. The motion was supported by Mayor Christine Herrington and Councillors Chuck Ward and new member Dave Cutler.

At stake, after almost two years of study by a large county committee including the mayors and chief administrative officers of each of Northumberland's seven municipalities, was a potential saving for Brighton of around \$900,000 spread over the next five years.

This was based on a firm five-year contract price offered by the OPP providing the measure is approved this summer. The triple majority system applied by the county will require a majority of the seven, plus a majority of council councillors, and the municipalities in favour must represent a majority of the population.

Similar savings, greater or smaller in some cases, also apply to the other municipalities. The decision followed almost a full hour of serious, almost impassioned, but controlled debate.

Those opposed argued that the financial figures put forth remain uncertain and too complicated. They also strongly opposed moving such a vital service to the next level of government and there were fears of the town losing its identity and powers to a new "regional" type of county government.

Councillors Ostrander, Vandertoorn and Kerr argued that even if the savings were real, there would be a "catch-up" cost when a new contract is arranged in five years. Mr. Vandertoorn said he did not trust the "on sale" price offered by the OPP on a county basis.

Coun. Ostrander said the decision goes "beyond dollars and cents to the core of democracy," where people at the local level make decisions of local concern.

Despite a stipulation in the final report that Cobourg and Port Hope must cover all their own costs in connection with any settlement or legal actions arising out of displacement of some senior officers, Coun. Vandertoorn insisted that it could cost hundreds of thousands of dollars and a portion of that could spill onto Brighton.

Coun. Craig added fears the town would be "selling our birthright for a mess of pottage," while Coun. Ostrander called the deal offered a "money carrot."

Countering concerns about county spending and costs, Mayor Herrington, who is also Northumberland Warden, reminded that it was only after Emergency Services were downloaded to the county that Brighton finally got its own 24-7 (hours per week) in-town ambulance.

She said the same OPP force, the same personnel and the same 911-service would remain intact, with strong prospects for even more policing help according to the contract. With increased plant closings and job losses across Ontario, the financial aspects are critical.

"How can we justify to our ratepayers leaving around one million dollars of taxpayers money on the table? she wondered.

Also supporting was newcomer council member Dave Cutler who recalled full assurances by the OPP inspector the previous week that there would be no loss of service, in fact a probable increase through a larger contract and greater efficiencies. If the town doesn't take the offer, it will probably face sharply increased costs for police services starting with a new contract next year.

"This is an issue of trust in our own county council and in our own OPP. If we haven't got that kind of trust, then we have a much bigger problem than policing systems" he said.

Coun. Rowley made no comments during the lengthy debate at all, but voted against the plan in the recorded vote.

The final vote at the county level is expected within the next month.

The catering makes the Keeler Centre work for us

COLBORNE CHRONICLE

JUNE 19/08

To the Editor:

I find it necessary to write another letter about catering at the Keeler Centre. My family donated three times to the Keeler Centre.

Both my wife and I celebrated our fiftieth birthdays at the Keeler Centre. We held the reception there after my mother's funeral. All my friends from out of town commented on the courteous and professional staff, the clean and inviting environment and the hard work and dedication of Donna Rusaw.

A large number of my friends and family attend numerous functions at the centre as well as New Year's Eve celebrations.

People hold weddings at the Keeler Centre because Ms. Rusaw is the wedding planner. She can provide everything required for a wedding. Without her service, many couples would not be interested in renting the hall.

As a member of the building and fundraising committees, I was made aware by council that, in order for the facility to be built, the building had to be first and foremost a community centre with an arena. Thus, the name Keeler Centre was chosen and not Keeler Arena.

We discussed having the community hall completed with a full working kitchen and permanent bar facilities. Health regulations are very stringent and only people with catering licenses can bring prepared food in a proper vehicle to the facility. As well, liquor laws require bar servers to have Smart Service cards to provide alcohol to the public.

As it stands, if you want to hold an event at the Keeler Centre, you call Donna Rusaw and your work is done.

If you want this community to remain strong and vibrant, we need to keep the Keeler Centre the way it is and help Ms. Rusaw make it more prosperous by reaching out to help her.

Together, as a community, we can make it work by supporting Donna Rusaw. It is the catering that makes the Keeler Centre work for us.

Don and Rose Clark,
members of the fundraising committee
for the Keeler Centre

Graduation



COLBORNE CHRONICLE JUNE 19/08

Congratulations!
Amy Marie Meekes
has received her **Baccalaureate of Science in Agriculture** from the **University of Guelph**.
She is currently employed by **Monsanto Canada** as a marketing coordinator in **Guelph, ON.**
Well done Amy!
Love Mom & Dad

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