

news

■ ALNWICK / HALDIMAND TOWNSHIP

Public meeting will offer insight into final draft of township budget



JOHN LOGEL

COUNCIL CORNER

been redistributed to the county.

Coinciding with the reduction in OMPF, grant money for infrastructure has severely tightened up both historically and in particular what was experienced a few short years ago. In 2008 you will recall countries around the world, including North America, all experienced a major economic recession. During 2009 and 2010, both the federal and provincial governments handed out infrastructure money, in an attempt to jump start the economy. The stipulation was municipalities had to match the money. The township took big steps during this period. Unfortunately the current financial climate doesn't allow these big steps to continue.

The challenge this year is to provide the existing services with less money.

After our initial meeting council requested staff to sharpen the pencil, and at the same time

maintain safety services, such as police, fire and roads at current levels.

I expect this year's operating expense will be up slightly from last year, close to \$6 million. When you look at the size of our township — 39,000 hectares, second in the county, Trent Hills being the largest — this figure seems to be in line.

However when you look at our population density we have by far the lowest of any of the municipalities at 17 persons per square kilometre. The county average is 48 persons per square kilometre. I had never thought of it before, but look at it this way. A population of 6,600 and \$6 million works out to over \$900 per person. That's your tax money. I encourage all ratepayers to attend this meeting and provide your input. I can assure you, you will go away a lot wiser.

If you haven't already, you will soon receive your interim tax notice in the mail. Included is the quarterly information bulletin for the township with lots of interesting tidbits. Keep it in an easy to reach place for future reference.

Stay safe and I look forward to seeing you on the 26th.

John Logel is an Alnwick / Haldimand Township councillor.

Mark your calendar for Feb. 26. At 7 p.m. that evening Council will review the final draft and hold a public meeting to discuss and answer questions regarding the 2013 annual budget. The location is the municipal offices in Grafton.

The budget process started in earnest last fall. Since then staff and your elected officials have had several discussions, in order to determine how to best to spend your tax dollars. This year's process has been particularly difficult. In February 2012 the provincial government announced there would be changes to the Ontario Municipal Partners Fund (OMPF) beginning in 2013 through 2016. As a result, this year's funding for Alnwick / Haldimand Township has been cut by 8.8% (\$63,000). The program will continue to be reduced annually at a rate averaging 4.5%. The \$63,000 represents 1.75% of the Alnwick / Haldimand 2012 Tax Levy.

The Feb. 2012 announcement also stated funding for social benefits would increase over this time period. These benefits are managed at the county level, so in a nutshell, funding previously provided to the township has

■ ENERGY

Mayor to declare conflict of interest

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session, McDonald said.

It was for this reason he wanted to make known to his council and the public that he would not be taking part in discussions and declaring a conflict.

"I didn't want to look like a coward.... My job as mayors is to keep the peace and balance in the community," he said, adding that he feels a little guilty about doing so.

Having given a lot of thought to the situation, however, McDonald said he now must declare a conflict of interest.

Asked why he didn't do so when council discussed and passed a new bylaw of tariffs which requires, for the first time, a \$2,000 charge to developers of alternative energy projects in the township asking for council support and which require staff time to research them before hand, McDonald said at the time "it never even occurred to me."

That bylaw is of a generic nature applicable to all green projects, he said, and the provision that includes a public meeting allowing for questions and answers provides equity for both sides.

McDonald stressed that he has not wanted to declare a conflict of interest but believes he can't do otherwise although he said: "I feel guilty about walking away" from this "hot issue."

the projects and a grass roots organization, the Alliance for the Protection of the Northumberland Hills, is very active.

It is the Centreton-area project where McDonald said he has a pecuniary interest and conflict of interest, because he rents farming property near the south end to the Dejong family, opponents to the wind turbine proposals.

McDonald also said he owns property adjacent to the other end of the Centreton-area proposal and from higher elevations behind his home he believes he could see the proposed towers.

This proximity to the project could be seen as a conflict of interest, the mayor said.

As yet, the wind farm proponents haven't been to council seeking what limited municipal support can be given under the Green Energy Act, McDonald said. Most municipal-related planning authority was eliminated by the provincial government with the Act setting rules related to where such projects can be developed and how far from residences. Most recently, however, some changes were made that allow some municipal leverage (such as indicating specific or general support for various forms of green energy) although all final decisions still rest with the higher level of government.

"They keep changing the rules on this," he said.

Some requests for this kind of municipal support is coming to this week's council

■ ALNWICK/HALDIMAND TOWNSHIP

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McDonald to declare conflict in wind projects

VALERIE MACDONALD
Northumberland Today

GRAFTON — The mayor of Alnwick / Haldimand Township has informed fellow councillors he is declaring a conflict of "pecuniary interest" when matters pertaining to two proposed wind turbine farms come before council this week.

While the money-related conflict Mayor Dalton McDonald has identified is only applicable to one of the proposed Clean Breeze projects, because they are so close together he is taking this stand in order to avoid any appearance of conflict, he said in an interview this past weekend.

Each project consists of at least five wind turbine towers, one located near Centreton (referred to as the Nelson properties) and the other near Grafton (referred to as the Aird property), McDonald said. But those people living between the projects, and who have concerns about both won't likely discern the difference as it relates to him declaring a conflict about just one, especially when there is the same developer involved, he added.

It wasn't until a recent public meeting held in Roseneath by Clean Breeze for the Grafton-area project that a map put on display by the wind farm proponent showed the location of the two wind turbine projects in the township, the first of which could be in operation by next year if all provincial-level okays are received.

There has been a constant outpouring of opposition to