

No compensation for couple who blame township

for 'encroachment fiasco'

By John Campbell
BREATHON INDEPENDENT JULY 24/14

News - Cramahé Township - A Castleton-area couple won't be compensated for costs they incurred to make legal the workshop they acquired when they bought their home last October. They later found out that most of the workshop, 32 feet of it, sat on their neighbour's property on County Road 25.

In a presentation to council June 17, Dave Thomson said he was able to purchase the strip of land on which the building sat, and council that night granted the necessary severance, but he and his wife were looking for more.

They wanted Cramahé "to accept all financial responsibility" for monies they spent to resolve the issue. Their expenditures included legal fees still to be determined, the cost of a survey in excess of \$3,000, and fees paid to the township and agencies amounting to \$1,450. They also learned any adjustment to the lot line will require a change in zoning. "That's another \$1,000-plus," Thomson said.

He questioned how "this whole land encroachment fiasco" was allowed to happen, when "the structure was built to the latest codes and regulations" nearly four years ago and there had been numerous site inspections by township staff.

Thomson said Cramahé's decision to issue a building permit "based on unreliable information, one man's opinion, estimates and approximations is completely contrary to all other aspects" of the land management process. "Clearly, the majority shareholder in the responsibility for this blunder rests with the township of Cramahé," he said. "Someone, sometime, should have said 'stop!'" but the township failed to exercise "due diligence to ensure that all legal aspects of the building location satisfied all" government regulations.

"We believe that is a moral obligation of the township to accept the fact that a vital error occurred due to its policies, and that the township must be responsible for the consequences of its actions."

Council gave no answer that night, asking chief building official Natalie Moroz-Cornell to prepare a report which council received July 15.

She said a building permit was issued based on information provided by the owner of the property at the time. "Determining the location of property lines is not within the

scope of the Building Official's duties," Moroz-Cornell said. "The responsibility and onus is on the applicant to provide correct information and to construct in accordance with the documents as submitted. The onus is also on the owner, current and future, to be familiar with their property and know their boundaries."

She added that "it is a common 'best practice' in Ontario for a potential purchaser and/or their solicitor to request an up-to-date survey from the seller in order to confirm the boundaries and measurements of the land and the positions of major structures."

Moroz-Cornell said the costs incurred by the application to move the lot line and obtain the required rezoning was \$3,275. There were additional costs for the survey and legal fees. "I think the man should be happy that he's got a building on the place," Councilor Ed Van Egmond said. "His beef is with the previous owner. I see no liability here from the township at all."

"I would never buy a piece of property without a survey of it," Mayor Marc Coombs said. Council received the report as information and took no further action.

Councillor bidding to move up and become Cramahé's next mayor

By John Campbell
BREATHON INDEPENDENT JULY 24/14

News - Cramahé Township - It will be two veteran members of council vying for top spot in this fall's municipal election.

Councillor Pat Westrope has her eyes set on becoming mayor, a position that's been filled since 2007 by Marc Coombs who hopes to remain in the post for a third term.

"I've worked and lived in this community all my life and I'm passionate about it," Westrope said. "It's time to move up to a position where I feel I can make the changes that people want and I see are needed."

Westrope served 12 years as councillor and deputy-reeve in Colborne before the village and township amalgamated; she's been a Cramahé councillor for the past eight years.

She points to her experience and said she's "out there all the time" listening to what people are saying. What she's hearing is they want change that results in more accountability and transparency in how things are done and money is spent in the township, and stepped-up enforcement of bylaws.

"Some of the things I think we need to do is offer more opportunities for public engagement," Westrope added. There are many skilled people living in Cramahé and "we're not tapping into their skills and expertise the way we should ... It's arrogant to think that five members of council have all the answers." Westrope said the township is failing its seniors by not providing them with proper recreation facilities.

"They have no identifiable place" where they can gather, to chat, play games, have lunch and drink coffee, she said.

Colborne used to have a drop-in centre that a retired couple opened, but the building fell into disrepair and attendance dwindled. The municipality took it over and eventually sold the property to a dentist so he could expand his practice, which didn't leave any location where seniors could meet.

"We need to offer some kind of alternative," Westrope said. The retired educator has been involved in numerous community projects, such as chairing Colborne's 150th anniversary committee, and initiating the highly successful Music in the Square summer concert series. It's entirely funded by sponsors and the proceeds from 50/50 draws, with no money coming from the municipality, she said.

Westrope said being the head of council will give her a better pulp to push for change.

Nothing she hopes to accomplish will happen "unless I can convince the rest of council to be on my side," she said. "I as one person am not going to be able to do all the things that I want to do ... It needs to be a collaborative, cooperative effort, but I can at least feel that I can point out the pros and the cons and the various opportunities" that are available by moving in a certain direction.

"Part of my role will be to convince them that's the best way to go," she said.

Rather than complain, councillor became part of the solution

By John Campbell
BREATHON INDEPENDENT JULY 24/14

News - Cramahé Township - When Clinton Breau ran for election in 2010 it was because he was upset with "a council that wasn't productive" and feeling "a lot of frustration around the way they were treating each other and treating the public."

Rather than merely complain about what was happening, he decided "to try to become the solution."

Four years later, having worked with essentially the same council members as their colleague, Breau said he sees more of the "big picture" of how a municipality operates than he did as a "narrow-sighted" candidate and then "green" councillor.

"We have an incredibly cohesive, cooperative, respectful group of council members that have moved our agenda, our priorities along very well," he said. "I also realized very quickly into my term that bureaucracy is a very slow moving process," and that "it does take a number of steps" to get things done and can involve different parties inside and outside the municipality.

He also "realized there are two sides to every situation," Breau added. But he's still "not okay with [the] status quo" and will be looking to continue to advocate for change should he keep his seat at council.

in Marmora, has served on and chaired a number of committees, including those responsible for organizing the Apple Blossom Tyme, installing a playground at Rotary Centennial Park, and raising money for a skate park.

If re-elected in October, Breau promised to "continue to bring an open mind, ask lots of questions, and resolve to make hard decisions."

Breau, who just completed 14 years as an elementary schoolteacher and has been named principal of a school

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Obituaries

BOS, Peter - Peacefully at his home on Wednesday, July 23, 2014, in his 85th year. Beloved husband of Maria. Loving father of Mary (Mark) McConnell, Evert (Tracey), John (Yvonne), Janet (Andrew Steen) and Christina (Paul) Novak. Dear grandfather of Jordan, Derek, Spencer, Madison, Camryn, Taylor, Kaylee, Gabriella and Sara. He will be sadly missed by his brother and sisters. A celebration of Peter's life will be held at a later date. Donations to the Canadian Red Cross would be appreciated by the family. Condolences received at www.MacCoubrey.com

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