

Awender trespass letter rescinded

MANDY MARTIN
For Northumberland Today

CRAMAHE TOWNSHIP — Township resident Ken Awender can now visit the Colborne Town Hall without trespassing. On May 5, Cramahe chief administrative officer Christie Alexander sent an e-mail stating a letter rescinding a "no trespass" ruling the municipality first issued to Awender on Jan. 5, 2011 and again in a second letter dated March 30, 2015, is in the mail.

"There was no reason given other than my request to have it rescinded," Awender said following the May 5 Cramahe Township council meeting. "It's a relief to know I can wander the township. But I'll wait until I get the actual letter."

Awender, who unsuccessfully ran for a Cramahe Township council seat last fall and who now oversees a YourCramahe Facebook page which posts council and other community news, says the reason for the initial 2011 letter from the Township was never explained to him.

"No one ever discussed it with me, what the reasons for it were," Awender says.

But he suspects it might have something to do with the 2011 talks of the volunteer Cramahe Fire Department forming a union.

"It wasn't me, but people were mad when I spoke up about some things," Awender says.

The 2011 letter stated Awender was prohibited from the north and south works yards and north and south fire halls. His presence at the Colborne Town Hall was "restricted to attendance at public meetings or to appointments that have been scheduled in advance through Christie Alexander, CAO, or (then-by-law officer) Jim Harris." Harris, a retired OPP officer, had also been appointed the Cramahe Township Fire Chief. He is no longer employed by the municipality.

The 2011 letter cited the Trespass to Property Act and referenced Bill 168, the Occupational Health and Safety Act 1990, Section 32, Violence in the Workplace."

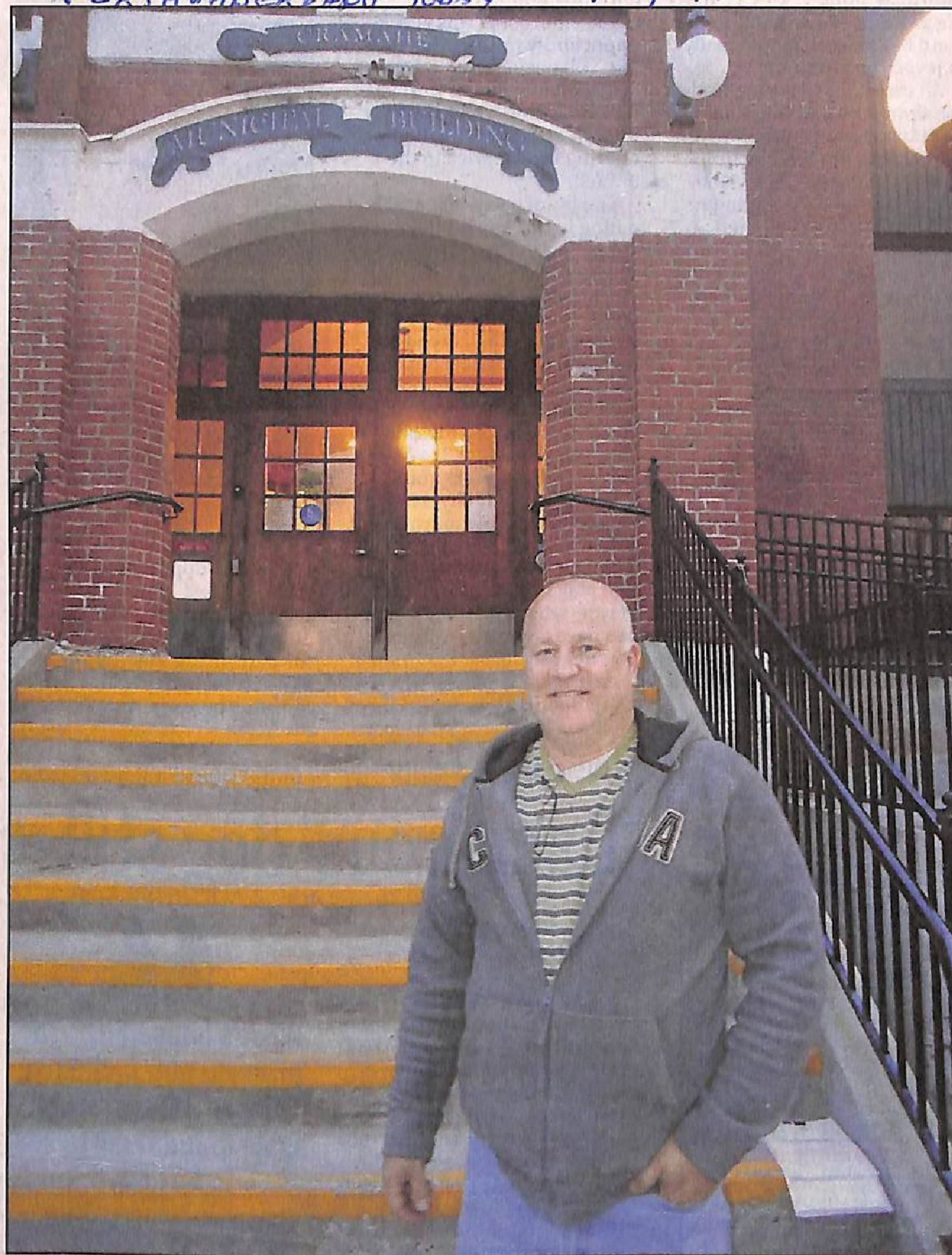
The 2011 letter was copied to then-Northumberland OPP Inspector Doug Borton.

"There was never any violence on my part," Awender says.

It was on March 30 of this year that Alexander issued a second letter to Awender, hand-delivered to his residence by bylaw officer Holly Grant.

"The March 2015 letter states,

Further to your attendance at the Municipal Office / Town Hall (1 Toronto Street, Colborne,



MANDY MARTIN PHOTO

Ken Awender can now visit Cramahe Township town hall in Colborne, the fire stations and works yards, with the notice May 5 rescinding a "no trespass" letter.

Ontario) last Friday, March 27, 2015 at 3:35 p.m. to obtain a burn permit: please be reminded that your presence at the Town Hall is restricted to attendance at public meetings or to appointments that have been scheduled in advance through the Chief Administrative Officer."

The second letter was also copied to Northumberland OPP Acting Inspector Philip Pike.

"I have been attending council meetings, been in and out the Town Hall before and no one said anything. I don't understand why there was no time limit (on the first letter) or what they are con-

cerned about," Awender said.

Mayor Marc Coombs was aware of the March 2015 letter being sent to Awender by Alexander, but the rest of council was not informed, Coombs said at council April 21.

Asked for further explanation of why the letter was initially issued and what the concern was four years later, Coombs and Alexander said they would discuss one-on-one with Awender and a press person. On April 23, Alexander and operations manager Dan O'Brien met with Awender and this reporter.

At that meeting, the CAO said

she was acting in Awender's interest when the second letter was issued: "You could have been arrested at any time in the Town Hall office."

At the April 23 meeting, Awender requested the letter of trespass be rescinded. Alexander said she would consider the request and "speak to municipal staff" and respond to Awender "in a couple of weeks."

On May 5, Awender announced on Facebook: "Cramahe Township CAO has officially rescinded Notice of Trespass against Resident Ken Awender.. letter to be forth coming this week."

Cramahe passes budget

MANDY MARTIN
For Northumberland Today

CRAMAHE TOWNSHIP — They got it done. Cramahe Township council approved the 2015 budget at its May 5 meeting.

After a final paring of \$30,000, the budget increase was kept at 2.9%, which represents less than a 1% tax increase — or \$2.89 more on the average residence which is assessed at \$207,000 in the municipality.

The final tax bill sent out to residential, commercial and industrial taxpayers includes the costs of Cramahe Township, Northumberland County and education.

For residential taxpayers, blend the Cramahe and Northumberland County slight increase and with a slight reduction in education demand, the overall 2015 tax increase holds at .67%.

For commercial taxpayers, businesses with a \$350,000 assessed value will pay \$24.42 more for Cramahe Township government this year. However, despite an increase in Northumberland County tax needs, because education tax requirements have gone down, the final tax bill will show a \$69.57 reduction in taxes.

For industrial taxpayers, based on a \$350,000 assessed value of property, \$42.38 more will be required this year for local government. Again, even with a slight Northumberland County tax increase, the education tax demands have dropped, which translates to a final tax decrease of \$43.50.

Overall, it will cost \$8,959,722 to run Cramahe Township in 2015, up from \$8,703,329 in 2014. With 2015 revenues expected, that leaves \$4,913,646.68 to be raised by the taxpayers. The largest chunk of the budget (29%, or \$1.7 million) goes to public works, which includes roads, followed by environmental services (sewage and water systems) at \$1.6 mil-



Ed VanEgmond



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lion. Policing is the third highest cost at \$1.35 million, then administration costs at \$1.325 million. Recreation (which includes the Keeler Centre) comes in at \$1.35 million, construction at \$731,300 and fire services at \$498,900. Facilities (municipal properties) will require \$283,000, libraries \$232,000 and, finally, the planning and development office \$213,402.

Still reeling from the whopping costs incurred from 2013-14 winter maintenance, council has tucked \$100,000 into a reserve fund to offset any repeat performance. Down the road, if the winter reserve builds up, those funds can be used elsewhere — for future road projects, for instance Councillor Ed VanEgmond suggested.