

Mayor breaks tie

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Council deadlocks on whether to extend township's insurance policy for a year

MANDY MARTIN
NORTHUMBERLAND TODAY

CRAMAHE — That's democracy, Cramahe Township Mayor Marc Coombs said after another split vote at council Nov. 15.

It was his vote that broke the tie to decide yea or nay.

Deputy-mayor Sandra Arthur asked why council was being asked to extend a five-year insurance contract for one year before asking for quotes for municipal insurance coverage.

Cramahe currently pays around \$190,000 a year for insurance coverage obtained through broker McGlennon Insurance of Colborne. The five-year contract expires Dec. 31, 2016.

Two council meetings ago (Oct. 4), council passed a resolution to request bids for providing future coverage. At the Nov. 15 council meeting, municipal staff requested council extend the existing contract one year to allow staff enough time to prepare a legally vetted and thorough document to seek quotes.

Arthur opposed the extension: "It's not that difficult" to allow prospective bidders to obtain information, she said. Having gone through the process at her place of employment as manager of a Cobourg industrial park, she estimated it would take one staff member one to three days to provide the information to potential bidders.

Coombs noted there are only three companies which provide municipal insurance. The deputy mayor agreed but noted that brokers for those three companies can come up with very different pricing.

Coombs said many municipalities choose to support local brokers, in this case McGlennon Insurance and Newman Oliver who both have offices in Colborne. Arthur agreed with supporting local but noted that other brokers, within Northumberland County, might be interested in providing cost options and, if there is a significant cost-saving, Cramahe needed to be fiscally responsible.

There was a 48% cost reduction in insurance coverage for her business responsibility after going through a review, Deputy mayor Arthur said, an amount which represented around \$100,000 in savings.

A motion to proceed with a request for quotes was seconded by Councillor Tim Gilligan. After hearing from Cramahe Clerk Julie Oram, who said most of the Cramahe Twp. management staff is new, and that there are only two more meetings before year-end which puts pressure on getting tender or RFP documentation together, the motion was amended to ask the current insurance broker extend the coverage contract to Feb. 28, 2017 to give staff time to prepare documentation to obtain quotes. When it went to a vote, Arthur and Gilligan supported the motion. Councillor Don Clark and Ed Van Egmond opposed.

The tie was broken by Coombs, who opposed the motion.

In the subsequent vote — to approve extending the current insurance broker's coverage for one year — it was once again a tie vote. Mayor Coombs approved.

Liability is a major concern for municipalities, Clark said,

"Two years ago, at the Good Roads convention, all municipalities had the same problem: liability," he said, "It's the biggest budget issue because payments have been so large."

Cramahe has had "a few claims in the last few years so our (insurance) claims have gone up," Coombs said. "We could be on the hook for 100 per cent of a claim."

In public question period at the end of the meeting, Gritt Koehl of the Cramahe Community Association, confirmed that the contract would be extended one year and that Cramahe staff would, within that year, develop documents to seek new quotes. She then asked about the apparent ongoing tie-vote situation at Cramahe council.

"A split vote is democracy," Coombs said. "You vote and move on. It doesn't always go your way."

Koehl said it was "like Trump."

Coombs said he had spent several years on a council where he was always out-voted.

"It's just the way things are," he said. "That's democracy in action."

FESTIVAL OF TREES RETURNS



PETE FISHER/NORTHUMBERLAND TODAY

Colborne Public School music students Braden Griffin, Julia Koehl, Danika Beatty, Tyler Powell, and Laurisa Davey decorate a Christmas tree outside the school in preparation for festival of trees starting Friday at the Colborne Legion. The Festival of Trees has been going for seven years and has raised over \$60,000 for the Colborne Public School music program. Twenty-six Christmas trees are custom decorated by local businesses and families for the event in Colborne.

Santa Claus to visit Grafton Dec. 17

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CECILIA NASMITH
NORTHUMBERLAND TODAY

GRAFTON — Santa will make a last stop in the area before retiring to the North Pole to put the finishing touches on Christmas.

At least Kelley Hall of the Grafton Community Sports and Events Committee is given to understand that the Dec. 17 Santa Claus Parade in Grafton just might be the last Santa Claus parade in the area. As she speaks to various people making arrangements to participate, that's what they tell her.

It was several years back that Alnwick/Haldimand Township acquired its own Santa Claus parade, an evening event alternating between Grafton and Roseneath. The custom had lapsed last year, and Hall's committee had wanted to revive it.

This is the year, she said — and because it is a Grafton committee, the parade will remain in Grafton.

And while there are early-afternoon and early-evening parades,

Hall added, this might be the only 4 p.m. one.

The route is the same one covered by the Canada Day parade, beginning at the corner of St. Andrew's Drive and Old Danforth Road. It will travel north, turn west on County Road 2 and proceed to the arena. Organizers are hoping everyone will bring along a non-perishable food donation for the local food bank, to be collected along the parade route or dropped off at the arena.

Everyone is invited to linger at the arena for hot dogs and hot chocolate from 4:30 to 5 p.m., followed by skating with Santa from 5 to 6:30 p.m. — all thanks to the sponsorship of the committee.

Walkers and floats of all kinds are welcome to be part of the parade. You can register by calling committee secretary Jen Keller-Nelson at 905-349-3676 or committee chairman David Harnden at 905-349-3063. cnasmith@postmedia.com [Twitter.com/NT_cnasmith](https://twitter.com/NT_cnasmith)

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