

# Sewer, water decision to come says Reeve Adsett

Rockwood's pollution problems, first introduced in 1966, became a contentious issue in 1972. They were once again reheated at Monday's special meeting of the Rockwood Board of Trustees and members of the Eramosa township council. The trustees called the meeting so the two bodies could sit together and constructively consider the best way of dealing with the Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Health Unit's latest findings based on the recently conducted village survey.

Besides council and trustee board members, 30 village residents were present. They had understood it was to be an open meeting for the public and were anxious to learn what was to be done about reported problems. With long-time village residents were several new faces. Three men said Monday's session was their first council meeting. During an open discussion when taxpayers had an opportunity to air their views on why water and sewers should or should not be installed in the village, it was like a review of similar meetings held back in 1972. Many of the same old arguments were raised all over again.

"Our intention was to have a joint meeting with township council to decide what the trustees feel about what should be done about water and sewers in the village," were opening remarks of the chairman, Allan Osborne. He said the meeting was not to have been a public one but that, as so many residents were present, the trustees would proceed with the same format decided on earlier.

## Proposal

Mr. Osborne listed recommendations the trustees had drawn up: 1, that all findings of the latest inspection by the Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Health Unit be made available to council and trustees; 2, that each owner and occupant of the survey be made aware of their problems good or bad; 3, that all faulty water or septic systems be corrected on an individual basis by their owners; 4, that owners of faulty systems be approached by Health Unit representatives or trustees, with help and advice offered; 5, that a time limit be set for faulty systems being brought up to required standards; 6, if a system is not corrected within the time limit then an order will be issued by the Health Unit to have it corrected; 7, that Ministry of Housing loans or grants be made available through township council, to assist people in updating their systems; 8, that a by-law be passed by the township if it is not already existing, to conform with Ministry of Housing standards. Mr. Osborne explained to council that the Ministry offers an Ontario Home Renewal program to help in updating existing facilities. He said the Ontario government requires that the township have a by-law concerning the standard of housing.

The chairman broke down each point of the proposal. He was informed by Reeve Adsett that findings will be available to every individual as discovered by the Health Unit with each property owner getting a copy of the notice. The Reeve said that definite polluters will be notified individually and sub-standard systems sought out. Including people with nothing wrong," asked chairman Osborne. The trustees felt it was only good public relations that everyone should get a notice; that all 270 households should be advised of wells and septic conditions.

Dealing with the No. 4 request that faulty water or septic systems should be corrected on an individual basis by their owners, Mr. Osborne said that for the last six years the matter has been one of dollars. He said a number of new septic systems would not cost the \$4 million required for the sewer and water system. The trustees felt that, from an economic standpoint, in-

dividuals can repair their problem systems with the Home Renewal Plan. Included in the proposal was the suggestion that a committee should be appointed which would act as a liaison between the trustee board and people having problem facilities. "This committee's job will be to assess systems they find faulty, as well as give assistance and set time limits on an individual basis, depending on the amount of the problem, and people's ability to fix it," said Mr. Osborne.

Mr. Osborne said the committee would establish a time limit which will have been the Health Unit's time to get it done. "A time limit in which to fix it up," he explained and said that if the limit is not adhered to then it will be up to the Health Unit to follow through. "This is rather than asking the Health Unit to come in. The committee will offer assistance and advice. If it doesn't work then enforcement by the Health Unit will be required."

The trustees do not envision every home owner requiring assistance. It is only provided for those with an income of less than \$12,500 maximum. "Do you feel we need additional money for people above that bracket?" questioned the chairman. It was felt there was no point in trying to solve that problem until it was known who needed assistance. Trustees felt that once polluters have been determined and to what extent, then decisions could be made.

Reeve Bill Adsett answered the trustees' proposal. "I think we should come through and comment on that," he said. He covered all requests, saying findings will be available to council and to trustees and all property owners will be made aware. The Reeve said he believed that Dr. Dale of the Health Unit had made a very favorable report and that it is his responsibility to see that water is helped and sewers available in the village. "It's his job I think said the Reeve. "I think he is prepared to see to it."

The Reeve pointed out that, if faulty systems are not corrected within a time limit an order will be issued by the Health Unit to have it corrected. "It is not within our jurisdiction either as trustees, council or inspector to enforce. The responsibility is the Health Unit's to order," he said. Reeve Adsett said the Health Unit will be setting stringent time limits. "Two or three owners of holding tanks have been approached already," he said.

"I'm not crazy about the point, but I must explain that the Reeve of this municipality is placed in an extremely awkward position. I know that, sometime further or later a Reeve was going to have to face this issue. It's here now," he said, explaining that the decision will have to be made within a few days.

## Responsibilities

"If we go along with the proposal of clearing up the situations individually and not municipally, it will be those of us here tonight, the elected officials' responsibility. With 78 unsatisfactory wells, we could well be inflicting what we will be inflicting, on those people with bad wells."

The Reeve said that alternative systems come at \$3,500 which is approximately \$21 and some a month. "Two hundred and forty dollars a year for a system which is not the answer. Not others' jurisdictions which we will be inflicting on these people; it will be ours," Reeve Adsett reminded council and trustees that the \$4 million expected cost when subsidized 75 percent by the provincial government would be \$1 million. He gave, as figures when tenders were last open, the amount of \$376 per household per year for both services including frontage charges. He said it was hard to admit that when costs were first revealed he thought the \$250 required then was quite a bit. "However, I voted for the thing knowing that it is the

only final solution," he said. Reeve Adsett told those present that in his opinion the latest report from the M.O.H. was the opinion of an expert. "I must take the opinion of an expert and this is what they recommend." He felt that if there is any more dilly-dallying, the ratepayers will be taken for another million dollar ride. He felt the costs are spiralling and all delays represent more cost to the taxpayers.

The speaker said he was concerned about cost to those people who are going to be told to clean up. He sympathized with a fellow who has a single lot with ownership for the past ten years or more but cannot build on it. He said he was sorry for the fellow with three lots with a house on one and two lots available. "Or maybe he's had to use two lots to put his house on and he centred them," he said.

## Farmers' plight

The plight of the farmer with limited severance rights was also presented by the Reeve. He felt it was a sad state of affairs for the farmer with only one lot which can be severed from his entire farm and more than one child for whom he'd like to provide land. "Okay, the fellow gets a lot off that bit, that's gone. There's two more children and there's still the farmer until he retires. We'd like to see him retire in this local village, but how can he?" The Reeve spoke of estate-type lots that can be approved in any given year. "As far as I'm concerned, if we don't take action on water and sewers, our planning will have backed us into a corner, and it's a hypocritical corner for our blighted hypocrisy."

"This is what I mean," said the Reeve. "We have said in effect, No, we're not going to have strip development in this county; we will direct people to the hamlets and villages. And what happens when we get them to the villages? Only two lots to build on if we can find such a one, and if they're available. He said that what is happening is what has happened for the last few years. He feels the farmers pick up and leave the Rockwood municipality and head for Guelph, Fergus, and other directions.

Not missing any area of projection the Reeve touched on the important issue that only modified development be allowed in which people can be assimilated into the community. "As far as I'm concerned, with 100 houses a year, there is no way you can assimilate that number into this kind of community. The Reeve said he was aware that development follows sewer lines. "However, I think that, if we can't plan our own municipality and do it gradually, then we don't deserve to have an orderly development here, and an assimilated population," he said.

"Let's review," said the Reeve. He felt with spiralling costs the amounts proposed for the system could be up some 25 or 30 percent over the original. "Okay, if it is that \$376 figure, which I hope it isn't as much as, that is \$365 for 365 days. A dollar a day. That's scarcely more than a pack of cigarettes to get good.

clean water and take away your sewage. He finished with a flourish. "That is my proposal, gentlemen!"

When the Reeve sat down he was applauded loudly. Many of those present were, themselves, developers in the area. Anne Scharf of Supreme Realty was present at the meeting. She had handed the Reeve a petition which she had taken to village residents asking if they did or did not want sewers and water. The petition contained 59 names in favor of sewers and water. Mrs. Scharf said that many of those on the list were senior citizens who knew there was incredible cost involved but felt there was a health hazard cost shouldn't be considered at all.

Mrs. John O'Rourke gave her name as living on Harris St. She said she didn't know if the Reeve is familiar with Harris St. "But there are an awful lot of senior citizens on that street. Now if I'd known there was a petition I could have gone out and gathered maybe 200 or 300 names against it," said Mrs. O'Rourke.

The Reeve mentioned a pack of cigarettes a day. It's been a long time since we had a pack of cigarettes a day," Mrs. O'Rourke explained that \$365 a year on top of what they were already paying

would be quite a load. "It really would be and there are any number of people on my street who can hardly make it now on what they're getting from the old age pension, let alone people who are on fixed incomes like my husband and I."

The Harris St. spokesman said that costs of installing a new septic system at her home recently wasn't any more than about \$500. She said it didn't seem too bad. "But \$365 for old people on my street — they're going to find it pretty hard to face."

Questions of children getting ear infection in the river, sore eyes and stomach pains were all discussed. Mrs. O'Rourke asked the chairman when was the last time the M.O.H. had reported cases of gastric enteritis, black fever or related cases. No such problems had been reported.

Mrs. Scharf said her child had been hospitalized from a serious bowel infection. She wondered who pays medical expenses when kids get sick. Trustee Pat Smith said he would like to make a small observation on Mrs. O'Rourke's remarks. "Particularly in view of what's happened," he said. "I feel there is a stronger group afoot to put in water and sewers than certainly there are people

interested in finding the most economic way to live in Rockwood." He suggested the motives in some instances are quite ulterior. "I don't think we're looking for the best and most economical system in all cases," he said.

The Trustees are holding to their original proposal. Trustee Pat Smith said he stands behind the recommendations which he supported and trustees placed forward.

## Time important

"I agree with Pat on the grounds that water and sewers in the village is too expensive and we still stand on our recommendations," said Allan Osborne, chairman of the Trustee Board. Mr. Osborne felt that time is of an essence and that it is important that an alternative be put into effect immediately to correct problems which have grown over the years due to lack of remedy. "If we go back now and ask for survey, it will run into a long project. The Ministry of Health is saying, do something now. We haven't time to survey the whole system."

Varcoe pump out 45 gallon barrels being used for septic systems," said the Harris St. resident who feels the whole complexion of Rockwood will change if the system is installed.

One resident, John O'Rourke said he'd lived in communities where sewers and water were installed. That was followed by big hungry developers with polluted minds. He said there were more people with polluted minds than there are polluted wells.

He pointed a picture of sewers and water followed closely by developers and then for sale signs of people who cannot afford to live in a community any more. Mr. O'Rourke blamed the Health Unit for the problem in the first place. "I've seen Mr.

Decisions on the proposals made will, according to Reeve Adsett, be dealt with within a week. Those present at the meeting were told they'd get information from their village trustees.

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Max Storey	RR4	Rockwood	88
Keith Black	RR4	Rockwood	86
Ken Stubbington	RR3	Acton	84
Ken Murray	RR1	Acton	82 1/2
George Milne	RR2	Acton	82
Frank Anthony	RR1	Limehouse	81 1/2
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