

Mill Pond to be back in shape by the fall: Town

By IRENE GENTLE
The Champion

The weed-choked Mill Pond will likely be nursed back to health by the end of November, residents heard.

About 30 citizens got the low-down on a plan to rejuvenate the troubled pond at a public meeting hosted by the Town Thursday night.

The meeting, held in the lobby of the old Town Hall, featured a short presentation followed by a question and answer session with Town engineer Peter Linn and project contractor James Wraith of CRA Contractors Limited.

It wrapped up with the residents strolling to the pond itself.

The proposed project aims to dredge the pond of sediment, which harbours the roots of the invasive weed Eurasian Milfoil.

It's similar to Purple Loosestrife in that once it gets a hold, it tends to choke out other plant species.

"I don't expect it to silt up again."

CONTRACTOR JAMES WRAITH

In early July, work crews should start scraping about 30,000 cubic metres of sediment from the pond.

That's the accumulation of about 122 years, said Mr. Wraith.

And due to stricter agricultural and construction regulations, it'll likely take even longer for current levels of debris to return.

"I don't expect it to silt up again," said Mr. Wraith.

But an altered design for a 3,500 metre wetland area on the north side of the pond has resident John Duignan, who in the past helped form the citizen-initiated Mill Pond Committee, concerned.

He objected to a shoal of tiny islands made out of organic mate-

rial such as tree logs and wood chips extending across the mouth of the pond. It's meant to act as a living weir.

Mr. Duignan feared the matter would rot and seep into the main water body.

"In a rainfall or flow, all this stuff will wash into the pond," he said.

Mr. Duignan also worried about insufficient water flow from the Sixteen Mile Creek into the pond.

"Then it would quickly degenerate into a swamp," he said.

About 10 per cent of flow from the creek is expected to feed into the pond, said Mr. Wraith.

In average rainfall conditions, that means the pond would likely replenish itself every six to 10 weeks.

He believed the weir will act as a filtering mechanism, so if sediment builds up, it'll be trapped in the wetland area.

Any future dredging would then be isolated to that site.

Town Councillor Art Melanson, the only political representative at the event, listened quietly to the presentation before giving it a thumbs up.

"I'm really in favour of it," he said, adding he'd like to see some aeration to be sure the water isn't stagnant.

But Mr. Duignan wasn't swayed by what he heard.

"It's going to need some modifications. There's no doubt about it," he said.

Wants original form

Mr. Duignan would like to see the channel dredged as well, and wondered why the pond wasn't being designed back to its historical form.

Overall, the design won kudos from Conservation Halton's Dave Featherstone.

"It does add some enhancements that weren't in the original design, but I think that's a good thing," he said.

But there's no foolproof way to eliminate milfoil for good, he warned.

"Milfoil is pretty hardy stuff," he said. "There isn't a sure-fire control."

Excavating the pond is expected to take 10 weeks, with another 10 weeks set aside to refill it.

Large trees are expected to remain in place during the work. Any small trees or shrubs that are removed will be replaced.

The project is expected to cost between \$595,000 and \$742,000.

The Town has also received funding from the federal government to erect a gazebo by the pond.

Residents interested in the plan can see it displayed in the lobby of Town Hall during business hours.

After hours, a smaller version of the design can be seen in a display case outside the doors of Town Hall.

Finally, updated plans can be accessed on the Internet by clicking on projects at town.milton.on.ca.

Public comment is welcome, said Mr. Linn.

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