

# Municipal Council Update

By Steve Ferguson, Councillor for South Marysburgh

There is a reduced council and committee of the whole meeting schedule during July and August and rather than providing a recitation of the agenda items, I'll bring forward some issues that may be of interest or concern.

## **The Ontario Municipal Board hearing**

This case, initiated by Pierre Klein of Cherry Valley, was heard on July 19<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> at Shire Hall. Mr. Klein was arguing against the nine ward plan that Council accepted in January 2016 after a long and sometimes contentious series of consultations with the public, arguing that it did not offer fair representation to all residents of PEC.

I am not going to offer an opinion of the testimony or the witnesses that testified on Mr. Klein's or the County's behalf. The Board Chair is in full possession of all the facts and witness statements and will likely make a decision before the end of the year.

The Board's decision on this matter is not open to appeal. If the Board favours Mr. Klein's position it will affect the election in 2018; if it supports council's decision, the 2018 election will proceed on the basis of the nine-ward plan whereby the ward of Bloomfield is absorbed into Hallowell and council is reduced in size by one council seat in Sophiasburgh and the elimination of the Bloomfield seat.

If the Board doesn't render a decision until after January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018, it may affect the 2022 municipal election.

## **The White Pines Wind Turbine Project**

I successfully proposed a motion to defer discussion to September 19<sup>th</sup> of a revised road use agreement between the County and wpd that was presented by staff only four days before last week's council meeting. The short amount of time did not allow appropriate consideration for input from residents most affected by the proposed nine-turbine project, they being the people and families in Milford and those living nearby.

Notwithstanding the deferral and the consideration of local residents, on July 31<sup>st</sup> wpd served notice on the municipality that it intends to commence work on the project beginning on Sunday, September 10<sup>th</sup>. The letter to the County is printed elsewhere in this issue, and complies with an OEB deadline of August 1, 2017 for notification to it of the start of construction.

What is missing from this latest action by wpd is the absence of confirmation by any level of government or a government agency that wpd has approval to construct the project at all given its reduced size compared to what their REA and FIT agreements stipulate.

The Approvals Branch of the Ministry of the Environment (MOE) confirmed that wpd must apply for an amendment to their REA before construction of turbines can begin; the timeline for approval or denial of an amended REA is approximately four months and as of

August 2<sup>nd</sup> the ministry had received no application. That said, MOE representatives did say that turbine bases could be constructed while the amendment is being considered (much like the brush clearing wpd undertook earlier this year). That raises a dilemma for the private landowners on whose properties the turbines are to be built: If excavation and construction begins in September and October, what happens to the approximately 75' diameter x 10' deep holes or foundations if the amendment to the REA is denied late in the fall?

There is continuing (and continuous) discussion about this matter and I'll have an update next month or perhaps sooner on my Facebook page.

## **Picton Town Hall**

At a meeting organized by Councillor Lenny Epstein on July 22, a passionate group of residents expressed their concerns about the possible sale of the Town Hall.

Recognizing that the building has heritage attributes and is a designated property; acts as a facility used by not-for-profit community groups; and may have potential for other uses, council voted in favour of deferring discussion about this matter until a special Committee of the Whole meeting on September 19<sup>th</sup>. Like the White Pines discussion which occurs on the same night, the deferral will allow concerned groups and individuals to develop plans that will guide council as to what to do with the building.

It is important for residents to understand that the rationale to sell the building is to reduce municipal debt, some of which was incurred as a result of the construction of the new fire hall in the industrial park. If the Picton Town Hall is retained, there may be no such reduction.

I seconded Councillor Epstein's motion for the deferral, and hope the public responds with well thought out, concrete plans that will allow council to vote in favour of the building's continuing use by the community. For my part, I support Lenny's initiative and believe members of the public – whether individuals, groups or organizations – should have access to an affordable building at which to congregate.

Have an enjoyable August!



**Hospital Foundation**

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