

Council approves plan to pave 80 km of roads

BY DANIEL SCHWAB

Essex town council approved a 10-year, \$21.5 million plan Sept. 5, to pave about 80 kilometres of roads in the municipality.

Chief Administrative Officer Wayne Miller said, "Council wanted to make sure we had (a plan) in place before the end of the term. That's why we did the roads study last year."

The \$60,000 road assessment study by KMK Consulting Engineers, a Kitchener-based company with a Windsor office, helped council establish priorities about which roads needed repairing the most, Miller said.

At the top of the list is Laird Avenue, from Alice to Talbot Streets, which Miller said has been identified as one of the municipality's "worst" roads.

The Essex Cookhouse faces Laird Avenue and the plans to repave the street were welcomed by the restaurant's owner, Larry Girard.

"It's good news," Girard said about the upcoming repairs. "As it stands now, the road holds water in puddles ... it's very unattractive."

Girard has owned the business since May and said



Essex Cookhouse owner Larry Girard kneels in front of one of many potholes lining Laird Avenue between Alice and Talbot streets. Town Council recently approved a 10-year, \$21.5 million plan to pave 80 kilometres of roads in the municipality.

customers are always commenting about the road needing to be fixed.

Reconstruction on the

Laird block is expected to begin in June 2007. Other roads considered to be priorities are the Gesto

Sideroad and Alice Street from Laird to Victoria Avenue.

Ward 1 Councillor Morley Bowman said when the responsibility for road maintenance changed to the town in 1999, less money became available for public works.

"It was an easy thing to cut," Bowman said. "I think roadwork fell behind in that. You have to maintain what you already have."

The plan also ensures that every gravel road will be paved by 2016.

Gas tax revenue from the federal government will cover half the cost, while landfill revenue will pay for \$430,000 of the cost starting in 2010.

Two years later, that figure will increase to \$600,000 per year until 2016, Miller said.

Starting in 2008, the town's average budget will also increase from \$750,000 to \$850,000, although Miller said the increase will not necessarily mean a tax increase. He said he presented the final version of the proposed plan to council last week.

"They've seen it take shape all along the way and have had their input in several, previous meetings," Miller said.

REVERSE 911

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Some of the troubles experienced by the Reverse 911 system stem from the fact that it currently uses a commercial database that lists many addresses according to pre-amalgamation boundaries. The county has requested permission from the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission to have access to the same databank used by Bell Canada. An answer isn't expected until December.

Berthiaume also said problems have

been identified with telephone lines to the support system.

"The 24 lines in the support system have been in place for four years," he said. "... We have concerns the lines may not be as clean as when they were initially installed."

Many councillors expressed concern that the glitches in the system may not be fixable.

"We did a survey of all of the town staff and one person received a call," said Tom Bain, Deputy Mayor for the town of Lakeshore. "Most of the messages were garbled and some were cut off. The results show 'successful,' but there are more than a few kinks that need to be worked out."

Essex County is currently the only county jurisdiction in Canada using Reverse 911. Many communities in the U.S. have operated the system successfully for years, Berthiaume said.

"I'm a firm believer that we should carry on with the process," Warden Mike Raymond said. "However, I do think county council should consider a few things. ... I think we should test the system and I think we should find out if more of an investment into the system is needed to find the glitches and fix them."

Councillors decided Berthiaume should submit a report on the state of the Reverse 911 system and what will be required to fix its problems.

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