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Relevance of a proposed fire sub-station in Clayton sparks a further town council debate

By Phillip Ambroziak
Gazette reporter

A strong debate was ignited Tuesday night regarding the proposed fire department sub-station in Clayton.

A motion was on the table asking for council to not proceed with the construction of a fire-substation in Clayton at this time based on a report from Mississippi Mills Fire Chief Art Brown, which indicated that attempts to recruit volunteers in that area in 2002 were unsuccessful, the number of fire calls in that vicinity were not great and that the estimated \$300,000 to \$350,000 cost would be better used on new and updated equipment for the existing fire halls in Pakenham and just outside Almonte. Ramsay Ward Councillor John Edwards, however, believes due diligence was not used in determining whether or not interested volunteers were available in the community.

"I don't feel that a letter, which was probably posted at Gemmill's General Store, and talks with a few people was adequate public forum," Edwards said. "There should have been advertisements and perhaps a public meeting held to see if the interest was there."

Edwards went on to say that the people of Clayton should not be treated as second-class citizens and that due diligence must be used to determine if anyone is interested in the job. He also cited the recommendation that was made following the operational review - that a fire truck could be kept in the county garage located at Union Hall.

In Brown's report, which was read to council at last month's meeting by Fire Committee Chair and Ramsay Ward Councillor Jim Lowry, stated that the idea for a fire hall in Clayton first came up in 2001 when the local fire department conducted an operational review of its services. At that time, Brown made it known to the residents of Clayton that in order for this to happen he would need dedicated and committed volunteers to step forth. Brown posted letters throughout Clayton in 2002 and made verbal inquiries in an effort to recruit these volunteers. Only one person came forward to make a commitment at that time.

"I don't understand the great desire to beat this thing to death," remarked Pakenham Ward Councillor John Levi. "We looked at the facts and this is what we concluded."

"If we took every recommendation (like that which was proposed by the operational review), we'd be in trouble," Lowry added. "I asked a few people about building a new

station, including a former councillor, and they all thought it would be foolish. I don't know why you want to muddy the waters John (Edwards), because it would be idiotic to put a truck in the county garage at Union Hall."

Almonte Ward Councillor Alex Gillis also feels that simply posting a letter asking for volunteers is not adequate.

"It took nine to 13 minutes to get the first truck to the McIntosh fire (at Clayton Lake July 9), and I don't want something like that on my conscience," Gillis said. "I don't think there even was a campaign (to recruit volunteers), and this (Brown's report) is completely filled with false logic - I'll be voting against this motion."

Pakenham Ward Councillor Denzil Ferguson was of a different opinion.

"I'm in favor of the motion," he explained. "The operational review was conducted when the old Station 1 fire hall (on Bridge Street) was in use. Also, who's to say all recommendations that come from an operational review have to be adhered to? And, to say people in Clayton are being treated as second-class citizens, well I don't agree with that at all - they too get adequate service."

Edwards' convictions were also challenged by Almonte Ward Councillor Rick Minville.

"Clayton is in John's ward," he noted. "We have tried to solicit people, so if you want to go ahead, John, and try to solicit them again, do it. You are the representative of Ramsay Ward."

"If people want to live at Clayton Lake they'll live at the lake," Lowry added. "Are we going to start billing people for extra protection?"

Ramsay-Ward Councillor Val Wilkinson was appalled by the entire situation.

"This is not a bad-mouthing issue, it should be judged by the facts," she remarked. "I'm ashamed and I think this is a disgrace. To advertise only by putting a letter on a board in Clayton is not the way we do things today. The way we do things is to look at reports, get all the information and assess it."

"It would only cost a few dollars to properly advertise this, and if a search for volunteers still comes back with nothing then that's all there is to it," Almonte Ward Councillor Jane Torrance said.

Almonte Ward Councillor Ed Wilson suggested that residents would be better served by the fire department if

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Restoring the hands of time

Almonte resident and volunteer Ron Caron has been busy trying to repair the historic clock, located in the old post office tower on Mill Street. Recently Caron, along with his friend and master clockmaker John Plewes, did some major work on the inner workings of the clock, which were malfunctioning and causing the instrument to gain time. Photo by Lianne Lahaie-Tysick

MPP supports historic designation for bridge

PAKENHAM - Lanark-Carleton MPP Norm Sterling has thrown his support behind a local effort to obtain an historic designation for the Five Arches Bridge in Pakenham.

Sterling has written to newly appointed Canadian Heritage Minister Helene Chalifour Scherrer asking that she approve the proposal to designate the Pakenham structure as a national historic site. In his letter to the federal minister, he stated his unqualified support for the local initiative, which is being spearheaded by the Town of Mississippi Mills and has also received support from Lanark County Council.

"I was trained as a civil engineer at Carleton University, and prior to enter-

ing politics I worked in the profession up the Ottawa Valley," Sterling says in his letter to the Canadian Heritage Minister. "I have always found this bridge to be a spectacular engineering achievement."

The structure spans the Mississippi River. Built in 1902, the stone bridge has been described as a "marvel of masonry." Its length is 268 feet, its width 25 feet, and its height 22 feet. Sixty-foot derricks support its huge blocks of stone.

Sterling said its construction marked a break with traditional methods and its design was at the leading edge of an engineering revolution.

"I would be pleased to have the

opportunity to join with local council in hosting you and the members of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada for an inspection of the bridge," Sterling wrote to the federal minister.

"It's one of our remarkable local treasures that deserves to be recognized on a national scale."

The Town of Mississippi Mills is making its application for the new designation to the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, which is connected to the Department of Canadian Heritage. The designation could lead to special tourism signage on the highway and boost local tourism.

Mayor Al Lunney to speak at annual heritage dinner

By Phillip Ambroziak
Gazette reporter

Mississippi Mills Mayor Al Lunney believes in celebrating heritage with a view to the future.

Lunney will be speaking to the large crowd expected to be on hand for the annual North Lanark Historical Society Heritage Dinner, which will be held at the Almonte Legion Friday (February 20) at 6:30 p.m.

"I've got a bunch of ideas jotted down, but my main focus of the night is to talk a bit about the Official Plan, which is not complete but does have a draft section on heritage, and to really get an exchange going with the people at the dinner," Lunney told *The Gazette*. "I'd like to facilitate a bit of discussion because it's important that

they share their thoughts and ideas not only with me but with each other."

The mayor did indicate, however, that the basis of his talk would be the local community's heritage is beneficial for the town from a business perspective.

"We have to look at heritage as good for business in this community because that is the shift that seems to have happened," he said. "I just hope it's an evening where everybody can share their input because I'd rather a shorter speech with a lot of time for interaction."

While this is far from Lunney's first public speaking engagement since being elected mayor in November, it is his first time attending the North Lanark Historical Society's Heritage

Dinner.

"It's really important that people get to see the politicians out to these events," Lunney stated. "You really have to hear what people want - that's what we're (council) here for, and these sort of relaxed environments such as a dinner are a good opportunity for that to happen."

Lunney went on to reiterate that heritage is good for businesses in Mississippi Mills.

"Years ago, and even to some degree today, there's people who don't believe in this and that preserving heritage buildings and such is a waste of money," he explained. "But, heritage is definitely a good thing and we have

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Local volunteer restores clock in town's historic old post office

By Lianne Lahaie-Tysick
Gazette reporter

Time is certainly on Ron Caron's side.

That's probably because Caron, a long-time Almonte resident and volunteer, has put so much of his time and effort into restoring the historical clock located in the old post office tower on Mill Street.

Caron began working on the clock in 1996 after he had learned that the heritage timepiece had fallen into a sad state of disrepair. Upon getting permission to access the clock, Caron dismantled it, cleaned it and got it running again.

"The response from people in the town when they saw it was wonderful," Caron recalled. "It (clock) has pretty much been my baby since 1996."

Recently Caron noted that the clock, which was built sometime between 1840 and 1880, wasn't keeping proper time.

"It was gaining 10 or 12 minutes so obviously, it wasn't keeping the right time," Caron noted. "The clock has been in pretty bad shape for quite some time. This problem manifested

itself because of problems."

Caron said that when renovations were being carried out on the old post office, dust particles travelled up into the clock works. That, coupled with the fact that the clock has been malfunctioning for a number of years, has made it difficult for the clock to run properly.

"The problem was there when I first went up in 1996," Caron said. "Obviously, the problem is still there and has gotten worse."

In November 2003, Caron decided to pay the clock a visit in an effort to determine what the source of the problem was. He noted he tried numerous tricks to get the clock running again, but nothing seemed to work.

"I tried to adjust things so that the clock would slow down," Caron explained. "But it didn't work. Instead, the opposite happened and the clock sped up even more. That's when I realized that this was going to be a pretty big job."

Realizing that this was more than a one-man job, Caron decided to call his friend, John Plewes, a master clockmaker, for some advice.







John has written books about repairing and restoring clock, so I knew he would give me some good advice," Caron commented. "He came to Almonte and we went up to the clock to have a look. He volunteered to give me a hand fixing it."

Upon taking a closer look at the inner workings of the clock, the two men discovered that some of the clock's integral parts were severely damaged.

"The problem was that when the anchor shaft was put in, one of pendulum drives was bent," Caron explained. "The shaft was really bent and you could see hammer marks on it. It's probably something that occurred way back when and it's been a problem ever since."

Once the two men knew what they were dealing with, they decided to work together to repair the historical clock. Caron even paid a visit to the Canadian Museum of Science and Technology, which has its own set of clock works on display. The museum's clock works are identical to the clock in the old post office so Caron

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