

PUBLIC MEETING
SEPTAGE BUSINESS PLAN
Thursday, February 18, 2010 at 7:00 p.m.
Almonte Old Town Hall Auditorium

Minutes

PRESENT: Mayor Al Lunney
Councillor Marilyn G. Anderson
Councillor Alex Gillis
Councillor James G. Lowry
Councillor Val Wilkinson
Councillor Brenda Hurre
Councillor Jane Torrance
Councillor Garry Dalgity
Councillor John Edwards
Councillor Rick Minnille
Councillor Denzil Ferguson

STAFF: Rhonda Whitmarsh, Treasurer
Diane Smithson, CAO
Tim Kocialek, Director of Roads & Public Works

OTHERS: Andrew Grunda, Watson & Associates Economists Ltd.
See attached attendance sheet

ABSENT: None

Mayor Lunney opened the public meeting at 7:00 p.m. He explained to members of the public in attendance that a presentation would be made by Andrew Grunda, Watson & Associates Economists Ltd. to present the findings of the Septage Business Plan. He indicated that at the conclusion of the presentation, the floor would be opened for questions from members of the public.

Mr. Grunda completed a presentation of the findings of the septage business plan including:

- Summary of legislative context and municipal response to same
- Capital cost estimate
- Capital funding alternatives, comparison and recommendation
- Operating cost estimate
- Septage volume forecast
- Operating cost funding alternatives and recommendations
- Next steps

Mayor Lunney thanked Mr. Grunda for his presentation then invited members of the public to ask questions or make comments. Several questions were posed by members of the public as follows:

- If not enough funds are raised through tipping fees to pay for operating costs, will the difference in revenues be levied to residents? Even if no volume of septage is received, the municipality still needs to pay its operating costs related to the plant. The municipality could consider options such as paying the bills from a reserve, borrowing the money in the interim and paying it back, etc.
- How much has been spent to date on studies to review this issue? No answer was provided to this question at the meeting.
- Have councillors taken a vote of rural people to determine if they want this plant? No
- What will be done with the biosolids? Did the scope of work for the business plan include the costs for biosolid removal? Are metals in the biosolids an issue? There are options available to the municipality for the biosolids management i.e. put into empty lagoon cells, use as cover for landfill site, haul away, etc. The business plan did not include the cost for biosolid removal. The Town's consultant reviewed the metal content of biosolids from other small communities i.e. Renfrew, Carleton Place and the content was 1%; lower than provincial ministry standards.
- Do we have capacity in the plant beyond 2031 which is when the calculations included in the study are completed for? The plant is only designed for a specified period of time as it would be too costly to design it for say 100 years. The plant is designed in such a way that it can be upgraded easily.
- Should consideration be given to applying a different inflation factor particularly to the hydro operating costs included in the study as they compose a large % of the operating costs? At this time, only the general CPI rate was applied for the "bundle of goods" and not a CPI rate specific to individual factors such as hydro.
- Are the rural residents being charged for sewage treatment as well as septage treatment?
No
- Why are revenues from the new hydro generation plant in Almonte not being applied to the cost of this project? The Mississippi River Power Corporation is currently looking at other generation projects that the proceeds from could be applied to all of Mississippi Mills. If interested in having the proceeds from the new hydro generation plant being applied to all of Mississippi Mills, a presentation should be made to Council.
- What does a tipping fee scenario not work to pay for the capital costs of the septage plant as it does (and is recommended) for the operating costs? Equity is a factor. The recommendation to not collect the capital cost through a tipping fee is based on putting the municipality in the best financially sustainable position. The facility is being building to address both current and future residents. The municipality has proceeded with collecting the capital cost for future residents through a capital development charge and it seems equitable to collect from existing ratepayers from a capital charge as well.
- Why are we proceeding with the construction when there is no legislative requirement to do so? The municipality may lose the opportunity for grant funding and given the finances of the federal / provincial governments, there may not be as many grants available in the future. Look at Provincial planning policy that speaks to having the capacity for rural development. It is not just one small piece of legislation under the Nutrient Management Act but it is part of the greater policy development of the Province. If Mississippi Mills waits to see what happens, it may pay higher tipping rates at another municipality's plant and there is no guarantee that those other municipalities will have the capacity to accept Mississippi Mills' septage volumes.
- Can you describe what the new plant will look like? Will it fit in with its surroundings? An explanation was provided by the Public Works Director. Yes, it will fit in very well with its surroundings.

- How is Almonte paying for its share of the sewage treatment plant? The cost of Almonte's share of the plant will be paid for through development charges and user fees.
- What alternative technologies have been reviewed and rejected? Six different scenarios were considered during the environmental assessment process for the plant. The following alternatives were looked at for septage treatment: geotube, lime stabilization. The treatment plant option was chosen as it could accommodate both septage and sewage treatment.
- What are the benefits being offered to the rural residents for the septage treatment plant? If the municipality waits until legislation imposed to ban spreading, we may not have anywhere to send the septage for treatment. Mayor Lunney read comments from a letter received from Minister John Gerretsen, Ministry of the Environment on the fact that the Province is committed to banning the practice of septage spreading on fields but currently lacks treatment capacity if the decision was made.
- Would Council consider constructing the plant but not bringing on the operation of it until the Province imposes a ban on field spreading of septage? No response was provided to this question at the meeting.
- What is Council going to do if ratepayers decide to use haulers who tip elsewhere but at the new plant? No response was provided to this question at the meeting.
- Why not allow the public sector to address the issue of septage treatment should the Province follow through on banning septage spreading? No response was provided to this question at the meeting.
- What % of the cost of the project is rural based? This % does not match with the capacity given. Septage makes up 1-2% of the volume expected to be treated at the plant but represents 10% of the loading that has to be treated. It is the treatment of the septage loading that costs the most.
- Will this project be looked at from an overall Mississippi Mills perspective i.e. everyone pays for the entire cost of the treatment plant? The principle across the province is that the user pays. Where possible, have the benefitting parties pay for their respective shares. A tax does not necessarily reflect a use of a system.
- Why are we being asked to pay now based on a higher septage volume when in the future it is much lower? The municipality is building the plant to accommodate flows for the next 20 years. With higher septage volumes earlier, we would have the benefit of external users (outside of municipal boundaries) to help pay the cost of the plant. As the population within Mississippi Mills grows, we would be able to accept less external septage due to capacity of the plant.
- If households pay the \$156 capital fee up front, will there be any additional taxes on our tax bills? If residents pay the capital cost in advance, there would not be a cost for the capital portion of the plant on the tax bill.
- Is Council going ahead with the sewage treatment plant with septage capability? Yes

These questions were addressed by either Council, staff or the consultant. In addition to the questions asked, a number of comments were made either in support of or against the business plant.

After all questions had been addressed and comments made, Mayor Lunney advised those in attendance of next steps for the project which include:

- A meeting will be held in Toronto next week between some members of Council and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to discuss the issue of banning septage spreading

- Council will continue with its lobbying efforts with Provincial representatives on the banning of field septage spreading
- The tender for the project will be released in early April which will provide the cost for the plant capital cost

Mayor Lunney then closed the meeting and thanked those in attendance for coming.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Diane Smithson, Recording Secretary