

Police, fire officials investigating suspicious house fires

By Jaime Myslik

PUSLINCH - Fire and police officials are looking at possible links between three recent fires at unoccupied houses in the south-east portion of Wellington County.

An Oct. 28 fire destroyed an unoccupied home on Arkell Road near Nassagaweya-Puslinch Townline, less than 10km from two similar fires in neighbouring Guelph-Eramosa on Oct. 14 and 19.

A passerby called in the latest fire just after 5:30am on Friday, explained Puslinch Fire Chief Steve Goode.

He told the *Advertiser* the house was fully engulfed in flames when firefighters arrived.

"That's a great indicator for us that something's going on because it's not a traditional house where it could be smoking materials that caused the fire, a pot on the stove or electrical," Goode explained.

On Nov. 1 he went into more detail.

"The OPP are treating it as arson, all three fires," Goode said. "There's no other factors that play into this; there's no hydro to the building, the environment as far as lightning goes didn't exist, it's not [inhabited], so the fact of the matter is somebody lit it."

"There's no doubt in our minds, we just ... don't know what the device was that lit the fires and how the fires were lit."

OPP Sergeant Jamie Gillespie confirmed arson is the likely cause of the Puslinch fire.

He added that until police and fire officials "get a more clear initial cause of the fire they won't know for sure, but that's the suspicion ... that it's going to be arson."

The house on Arkell Road was under renovations at the time of the fire, but was unoccupied, Goode said.

About 25 firefighters from the Puslinch, Guelph-Eramosa and Guelph fire departments fought the blaze from outside the home.

The Arkell Road fire was the third suspicious fire at an unoccupied home in 15 days.

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Halloween fun - From cowgirls to dragons to scary ghosts, children came out in droves dressed in costumes for the Halloween Haunt Street Walk in downtown Fergus on Oct. 29. Declan Witzke dressed up as a fireman and Violet Wheeler as a Starbucks frappuccino. More photos on page 47. Photos by Olivia Rutt

Township endorses moratorium, opposes water bottling that could affect local supply

By Mike Robinson

ELORA - Centre Wellington council has officially taken a stand, opposing water bottling operations that could adversely impact municipal water supplies.

At the same time, council endorsed Ontario's proposed two-year moratorium on new and expanded water bottling operations.

Council's resolution on Oct. 31 came short of stating the township is opposed to Nestlé Waters, the water bottling company that purchased the Middlebrook well site earlier this year (after making a conditional offer on the property about 18 months ago).

Council's discussion was held in front of a packed gallery, including many who participated in a Save Our Water rally prior to the meeting.

Mayor Kelly Linton stated the discussion was a follow-up to the Sept. 26 presentation from Save Our Water, whose members requested council pass a resolution stating the municipality is opposed to Nestlé's water taking proposal.

At that time, councillor Kirk McElwain proposed the township "send letters to Premier Wynne and Minister Glen Murray expressing our collective concern that the issuance of a permit to Nestlé to take water from the Middlebrook well site is not in the best interest of the Township of Centre Wellington and the watershed by its surrounding municipalities."

The recommendation was deferred until the Oct. 31 meeting.

Staff were asked to review the status of the City of Guelph resolution regarding Nestlé's permit renewal in Aberfoyle, and for municipal representatives to meet with Murray, Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

"Both those things have happened," Mayor Kelly Linton said on Monday night.

And, he added, since the Sept. 26 meeting the province initiated a moratorium on new or expanded commercial water bottling operations - which would include the Middlebrook well.

That means there will be no **SEE MORATORIUM » 42**

Highway 24 is no more - county removes major roadway designation

By Patrick Raftis

GUELPH - Wellington County has amended its Official Plan to remove a "Proposed Major Roadway" designation on the former Highway 24 corridor through the county.

The lands subject to the amendment are parts of Lots 1 through 18, Concessions 1 through 5; and Lots A through D and F, Concession 6, Division E in the Township of Guelph-Eramosa.

A bylaw to adopt Official Plan amendment No. 102 for the County of Wellington was approved at the Oct. 27 county council meeting.

The alignment of the highway has been shown as a "Proposed Major Roadway" on the Guelph-Eramosa Land Use Schedule (A-3) since the county Official Plan was originally approved in 1999.

In recent discussions and correspondence, the province has stated its intention to abandon the current designation and that it will not offer funding assistance to build the road, explains a staff report from

county manager of policy planning Mark Paoli.

The report notes the history of the designation actually predates the county's Official Plan. In 1997, the Ministry of Transportation received Environmental Assessment clearance for a realignment of former Highway 24 between Cambridge and Guelph.

The ministry then designated the route as a controlled access highway. In 1998, former Highway 24, from Highway 401 in Cambridge to Highway 10 in Caledon, was transferred to the Region of Waterloo, County of Wellington and Region of Peel as part of a local services realignment.

Guelph-Eramosa Township initiated an amendment to its zoning bylaw to remove the holding provision from six industrially-zoned properties in the eastern part of the subject lands.

The holding provision had been applied to protect the future highway corridor.

Given that OPA 102 proposes to remove the Proposed Major

Roadway designation, the township decided the holding provision is no longer necessary, the report explains.

The bylaw was worded to ensure the holding provision would not be removed until OPA 102 is in effect.

"The province has abandoned their plans to continue with that road expansion," noted councillor and planning committee chair Andy Lennox at the Oct. 27 meeting.

He said, as a result of the move, "properties would be freed up to be developed in an appropriate manner."

Councillor Gregg Davidson said he was "a little concerned" about the proposed abandonment of the potential four-lane highway corridor, noting the cities of Cambridge and Guelph are growing quickly around it.

"I do realize that the majority of people that use that corridor are not from Wellington County," said Davidson.

However, he added he felt the **SEE HIGHWAY » 33**

Girl power shines through at region's first YMCA event

By Jaime Myslik

ABERFOYLE - Empowerment was the key message at Guelph and Wellington County's first ever Power of Being a Girl conference.

"All of our little components today ... are really about finding yourself and empowering yourself and believing in yourself," said Sarah Robb, one of the event coordinators.

"At the end of the day, we want them to go home and feel really good."

Power of Being a Girl is a

Canada-wide YWCA event, but the Oct. 27 event at the Puslinch Community Centre in Aberfoyle was the first in the area.

"We've always been partnering up with Cambridge, Waterloo and Kitchener Ys and we thought 'let's give it a try, let's bring it local,'" Robb said.

"Before we were bringing our girls to them and we thought if we stay ... we can bring in more community supports, more local, so a lot of our speakers today are right from the Guelph community."

The day was designed for Grade

7 and 8 girls and was open to all local schools.

"I think for Grade 7 and 8 girls they need to feel empowered and they need to be exposed to as much positive atmosphere as possible," said Elora Public School child and youth worker Gayton Fairfield.

"It just gives them a day to have a girl day and sometimes girls need a little bit of freedom to feel empowered and to feel less judged and maybe, especially at this age, they may feel judged by boys."

The event kicked off with keynote speaker and Wen-Do women's

self-defense instructor Shailagh Keaney.

She spoke to students about how important it is to have empowerment throughout their everyday lives.

"By knowing your power, you can be who you most truly are and who your community most needs you to be," she said.

"When we each embody our power and we truly own it, we find the strength and courage to speak for ourselves and for each other - and in turn can inspire others."

"In this way and with each of

us we are changing our little piece of the world in order to make it a better place for all the women and girls."

Elora Public School Grade 7 student Kaitlyn Kaczmarczyk said Keaney's speech was empowering.

"It was like we could feel her words," she said. "It was like our inner girl was speaking up for itself."

Kaczmarczyk's first workshop was a kickboxing class.

"It shows you how powerful and strong you can really be," she said.

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