



Barn destroyed - More than 35 firefighters from four departments battled a massive barn fire for over 14 hours on Monday night and Tuesday morning. The barn was destroyed, with the damage estimated at \$3 million. Photo by Olivia Rutt

Large fire destroys hay barn; damage estimate \$3M

By Olivia Rutt

MONCK - A large fire on Monday night has destroyed a hay barn in Monck.

Firefighters were still working to extinguish the blaze more than 14 hours after the first call came in at 6:20pm on Nov. 14.

The fire tore through the hay barn, which was fully engulfed when Arthur and Mount Forest firefighters arrived.

The enormous barn, built just this summer, was filled with 640 acres worth of hay, farm equipment, drying equipment and a generator.

Homeowners Jorn and Eveline Steunebrink called 911 after seeing the fire.

Jorn said they were “sad, disappointed” and “don’t know how to

describe it.”

Wellington North Fire Chief Dave Guilbault said the fire was tricky to fight.

“We started with obviously a defensive attack because there’s no way we’re entering the building,” he said.

He explained firefighters had to protect exposures, which included another barn, a shed, a generator room and a fuel tank.

“We made sure that the fire didn’t travel, the heat didn’t travel to that building. There’s a bit of damage, but we saved that building,” he said.

“We had a fuel tank at the back that [had] fire impingement on it so we had to make sure it didn’t explode. Plus there’s a generator room, so we saved the generator room.”

More than 35 firefighters battled the fire, including those from Dundalk, Grand Valley and Shelburne. The Minto fire department was standing by.

Firefighters were still working to put out the flames the following day, as it worked through the hay.

Guilbault explained they were pulling apart the hay to extinguish what they can get at and used sand and rock to smother the below-ground cavity.

“There’s no simple way to put this out. You can’t use an aerial ladder because you can’t get to the roof,” he said.

The fire was initially being treated as suspicious.

“We now treat all barn fires as suspicious until we can determine otherwise, because there have been

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Grand River Raceway betting on future of Centre Wellington

By Mike Robinson

ABOYNE - Proponents here are betting on the future of Centre Wellington and the Grand River Raceway.

On Nov. 7 Centre Wellington council held a public meeting on the rezoning of the facility to include not only up to 450 slot machines - but also gaming tables.

Current site specific provisions limit permitted gaming at the site to a maximum of 450 slot machines, although there are only 252 slot machines on site.

Amendments would permit other types of gaming, such as table games.

With between 40 to 50 area residents attending the meeting at Aboyne Hall, Centre Wellington councillors heard impassioned pleas both for and against proposed expansion plans for the raceway.

Grand River Agricultural Society officials meanwhile, are trying to keep their options open. They believe additional gaming options will position the Grand River Raceway to be considered as a host site for an expanded facility.

Proponents in favour of the expansion looked at the financial benefits to the community and the projects that may never have been completed without the money the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Cor-

poration (OLG) annually gives back to the township.

Opponents argued hosting expanded gaming at the raceway may not be in the best interest of the community due to potential costs associated with gambling.

MHBC Planning was retained by the Grand River Agricultural Society to provide advice and undertake a planning justification report in support of the proposed broadening of gaming at the raceway.

MHBC partner and planning consultant Pierre Chauvin noted the company has been involved with the project since the inception of the raceway facility in Elora.

He said the site is very well established, having been there since 2003. It hosts an average of 48 racing events each year.

The facility consists of a gaming site (for slots as well as off-track betting), a half-mile track for standardbred horse racing, barn, outbuildings and grandstands with seating for 1,500 people.

Other accessory uses at the site include restaurants, meeting rooms, a gift shop, and the head office of the Grand River Agricultural Society.

The slots facility is operated by OLG and features 242 machines. It is open 24 hours per day, seven days a week.

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Updated information means town could grow to 14,500

By Olivia Rutt

ERIN - Erin’s growth has been hindered by the ongoing wastewater environmental assessment, but it now appears huge growth is a possibility for the town.

At a special council meeting on Nov. 8, John Mullan of Ainley Group provided an update on the EA process, presented new information, including updated servicing numbers, and suggested which neighbourhood to connect to future

municipal services.

The EA process is currently in phase two, which is expected to be completed by the end of this year. Phase two includes a peer review of the Assimilative Capacity Study, which stated servicing could be provided for 6,000 people, allowing Erin to grow by just 1,500 people.

Now, however, that number has been updated, said Mullan.

He explained populations from existing areas and new growth

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Stevens: new agricultural charges would have ‘enormous’ impact

By Patrick Raftis

MAPLETON - Leaders of area farm organizations addressed council here on Nov. 8 on the topic of proposed development charges on agricultural buildings.

Mapleton’s current development charges bylaw includes a 100 per cent exemption for buildings constructed for “a bona fide farm use.” A proposal presented at a public meeting on Oct. 11 would see the exemption reduced to 75%.

That would mean someone building a new barn, for example, would pay 25% of the non-residential rate of \$2.65 per square foot of gross floor area, which works out to 66 cents/ft².

The proposal drew opposition from the Wellington Federation of Agriculture (WFA) and a number of area farmers at the Oct. 11 meeting.

On Nov. 8, WFA president Janet Harrop and Henry Stevens of the

Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario (CFFO) addressed council, noting they were speaking on behalf of various commodity groups as well.

“We are here to speak as one strong, united voice representing the various farm organizations and commodity groups active in Mapleton and Wellington County in opposition to the proposed bylaw changes,” said Stevens.

“The potential ramifications on the agricultural sector are enormous.”

Stevens added, “Largely-rural municipalities such as Mapleton depend on a healthy agriculture sector for the municipality’s own health.”

While acknowledging a municipality’s needs to raise funds for infrastructure, Stevens said agricultural development charges are “not a legitimate method of raising those revenues.”

He stated, “Development charges were never intended to cover the ongoing costs of maintaining existing infrastructure. Existing hard infrastructure such as roads were to be maintained by the municipality using the existing assessment base.”

Stevens said the municipality will “automatically” receive additional funds through increased assessment as prices on farm land continue to rise.

Harrop said agricultural development charges are “an entire agricultural community issue.”

Implementing the charges “will affect all sectors, builders and suppliers,” Harrop told council. “Increased capital costs will affect our competitiveness as farmers when all farms around us don’t have these charges.”

Harrop stated cost of service studies conducted by farm organizations in the U.S. and by the Ontario

Federation of Agriculture (OFA) show that agriculture, through its general tax base, “is already paying significantly more in taxes than the

cost of services that that agricultural land uses.

“General road and bridge

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 Calendar**
 in the Nov. 25 issue

