

Debert Days Coming Back

By Maurice Rees

Marie Benoit and her committee at Debert Family Days Association have stepped up to the plate to undertake a major task for August 2016. They have developed an aggressive plan to revive Debert Days. The schedule of events has not been finalized, but based on the outline presented to municipal council earlier this month, it's a very aggressive plan.

Some of the possible events include working with the Debert Fire Department to hold a family dance with light refreshments; a giant street parade with money needed for a marching band, trophies, and other accommodations for judges and organizers.

Following the parade, the football field will be converted into a carnival atmosphere with

bouncy houses, booths, tents, bathroom facilities and electrical services. A pageant for the young people is also planned, as is face painter.

Other events such as antique car display and other attractions are desired, but such an event takes two things money and volunteers. If you would like to help, or have suggestions to make the return of Debert Days even more successful, the organizing committee is waiting to hear from you.

Most important of all is a large network of volunteers, who will undertake a number of the events. If the volunteers are in place and businesses feel the event will be successful, the money will follow. Those wishing to help can contact Marie Benoit, 902-956-1774, or E-mail: benoitmarie@yahoo.ca

Council and Residents Disagree

By Maurice Rees

An hour long presentation and discussion by Bernie DeCoste and Steve Payne representing residents of McCallum Drive, Hillridge Drive and Hillvale Drive requesting council's action to get streets paved 2016 was the opening item of business following approval of the agenda and approval of council committee meeting of February 11th at the March committee meeting on the 10th.

Council had dealt with the matter of possible repaving during meetings on several occasions throughout 2015. The streets in question are primarily J-class streets owned by the province and are not maintained by the municipality. When residents come forward requesting paving, the matter goes to a public meeting of taxpayers in the catchment area, who by majority must agree to pay for 50% of the project cost through an area rate.

At a November 15th public meeting residents felt the cost was prohibitive as it worked out to approximately \$46.00 per foot of frontage. For some residents the cost would be in excess of \$20,000, with some up to the mid-30's, and one taxpayer facing a frontage cost in excess of \$40,000. At that meeting residents decided to meet with provincial representatives to discuss their concerns about road conditions.

Moving forward to February 18th, 2016 a public meeting was held with residents asking if the municipality might pay its share of the cost based on the fact municipality owned property in the subdivision totaled over 1800 feet. Studies revealed if the county did contribute its share for 1800 feet frontage, the per foot cost would be reduced from \$46 to \$26. Municipal staff pointed out that for a new petition to be successful it would require 66.6% approval.

The DeCoste Payne presentation outlined all the problem areas, and rationalized with additional taxation forthcoming

from the sale of approximately 50 vacant lots, the increased tax revenues would more than offset the upgrading costs and that council should proceed with the repaving without application of an area rate.

Several councillors objected to the suggestion of funding the project from future tax revenues, and it would go against existing situations, where other areas have worked on an area rate based on frontage to recoup 50% of project costs, with the province paying for the other half.

At the end of the presentation council accepted the presentation for information purposes.

The next item on the agenda was a staff report recapping activity during 2015 and so far in 2016. Based on the taxpayers request at the February 18th meeting, the staff report calculated that if council agreed to pay its share of costs, based on 1800 feet frontage on municipality owned properties the cost would be \$46,800.

The matter was treated with a sense of urgency, because if council agreed to pay its \$46,800.00 share a public meeting with taxpayers in the area would need to be held and if 66.6% agreed to the revised frontage cost of \$26.00, only a few days were left to complete the application and submit to Department of Transportation & Infrastructure Renewal by March 31st in order to have the work done in 2016.

In discussion on the motion to find the source of funds to pay its share several councillors expressed concern it would send a message of preferential treatment to some residents while others were already in an area rate situation. When votes were cast, the motion was defeated.

Council then asked staff to prepare a report showing how much frontage the municipality owns in other areas, and what impact it's frontage would have on area rates for past or future situations.

Lake Reoffers for 2ND Term

By Maurice Rees

Andrew Lake, who was re-elected President of the Truro & Colchester Chamber of Commerce for a second term, introduced a list of seven policy priorities for 2016 at the Chambers AGM on March 19th. Economic Development topped the list and was followed by Tourism, Municipal Governance, Infrastructure and Transportation, Information and Communication Technology, Membership and Youth Engagement, Retention and Investment were identified by the Chamber's Policy Committee as priorities in 2016.

During his first term, Lake personally visited approximately 100 businesses to learn their challenges. Task forces will be established to handle each of the priorities. His efforts has brought a resurgence of the Chamber's initiatives. He is the first president, since 1999, to re-offer for a second successive term. Other newly elected executives and directors are: Vice-President Alex Stevenson, manager of commercial banking, CIBC; Treasurer Joanne McRae, senior staff accountant at WBLI Chartered Professional Accountants; Solicitor Elisabeth Sieber, McLellan,

Richards, Begin Law; and directors Don Hay, Hay Hospitality; Don Locke, RBC; Dr. David Gray, Dean of Dalhousie Agricultural Campus; Karen Baillie, Elegant Steps; Karen Gillespie, Nova Scotia Community College; Fran Grant, Remax/Fairlane Realty; John Squires, Pacrim Hospitality Services Inc.; Matt Robblee, Caldwell-Roach Insurance; Ron Smith, Old Fletcher's Farm Property Ltd., Masstown Market; and Dan Clarke, Stanfield's.

Stephanie Jones, McDonald's restaurant owner/operator, will remain on the board as past-president. Outgoing treasurer David Miller of PricewaterhouseCoopers was recognized for his contribution to the Chamber movement during the past six years.

The Chamber's annual dinner gala and awards will be held on April 21 at the Glengarry Best Western.

The Chamber has issued a call for nominations for BDC Business Person of the Year and, a new award this year, the Community Credit Union Business Excellence award.

To reserve a seat at the gala or for more information about award nominations, call 902-895-6328 or email ec@tcchamber.ca. Deadline for nominations is March 24, 2016.



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