

Councillors still heated over pipeline Power Budd contract approved

March 10, 2004

By Keith Gilbert

Warton Echo — The proposed water and sewer pipeline for Hepworth and Sauble Beach continues to be a divisive issue in South Bruce Peninsula.

A meeting Monday night (Feb. 9) saw council vote 5-4 to retain the services of Power Budd for another \$165,000 in its quest to find federal and provincial funding, much to the dismay of about 30 people who were at council to protest against the pipeline. The town has already paid \$203,000.

"This is just a retainer for \$165,000" argued councillor Yvonne Harron and "anything else (Power Budd charges) is above and beyond this..."

Councillor Pat Varley was also against the renewed contract which runs from February to December of this year. "Council just forges ahead with complete disregard to the taxpayers... Why do we need a lobbyist?" She suggested that senior staff should be empowered to work with the government agencies involved.

Councillor Gwen Gilbert was also on the attack and said that MPP Bill Murdoch and MP Ovid Jackson should be the ones to go after the funding.

Sauble Beach resident Dian Wood said the public "is confused, worried and afraid that they will have to sell their homes and cottages because some members on council are promoting a regional water and sewer system...."

South Bruce Peninsula resident Jim Porter also spoke against the pipeline and said the public was confused about the costs. He said he went door to door in the Hepworth area and that people "had little knowledge of it." Porter, who has attended recent council meetings, admitted he had no idea "what was true or false" and said he would be starting a petition against the proposal. Both Porter and Wood called for a referendum on the issue.

Tempers flared several times and on one occasion Mayor Carl Noble ruled Councillor Gilbert "out of order." Gilbert pointed out concerns about previous actions of Power Budd including costs of investigating election candidates and wanted to read an article quoting MP Ovid Jackson as saying a lobbyist was not needed. Noble told her she was bringing up "garbage."

Mayor Noble said that anyone wanting facts and figures to date were welcome to go to town hall and speak with works supervisor Bill Jones, but cautioned that figures were preliminary. Bill Jones, who was present at the meeting told Porter that a lot of questions he had asked could be answered.

"I am tired of people sitting back sniping... without coming in to get the information," stated Mayor Noble.

Councillor Brian Fulford said he had asked for a worst case scenario regarding costs. He stated that if there was absolutely no funding from either governments, with council bearing the complete costs, it would run between \$16,000 and \$17,000 per household for those people who would receive the service. "We know that's not going to happen."

While Fulford said he was in favour of sewer and water and felt it "a necessity," he believed the contract with Power Budd, that also included a budget, was not acceptable. "It's outrageous. I

just can't support those numbers."

Councillor Jay Kirkland believed the work Power Budd was doing should have been tendered out but felt that council should at least wait until a meeting with OSTAR (a funding arm of the Provincial Govt.) was held. He pointed out that there was an opting out clause in Budd's contract.

Noble pointed out that the project was three years old and that information is available. He stated he would never derive any benefit from the pipeline but it was something "needed" for the municipality.

Costs for a water pipeline from Wiarton to Hepworth and Sauble Beach, and a sewer pipeline between Hepworth and Sauble Beach with a treatment facility in between has been estimated to cost between \$63 and \$65 million.

Voting against renewing the contract with Power Budd were Harron, Gilbert, Varley and Fulford.