

Municipality chooses Genivar for septic re-inspection

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By Rob Gowan

Councillor says it's 'ridiculous'

The Town of South Bruce Peninsula moved to have Genivar perform its septic re-inspection program.

On Tuesday council approved a recommendation granting prebudget approval for 2013 to permit the town to enter into an agreement with Genivar to perform the septic re-inspection program. A bylaw regarding the program is to be placed on an upcoming council meeting for consideration.

But Coun. Janice Jackson called it "ridiculous" and "crazy" for the town to even consider hiring Genivar to do the work. Councillors Marilyn Bowman and Karen Klages also voted against the recommendation.

Jackson said she is opposed to Genivar receiving the septic reinspection job because Genivar has the multi-million dollar Sauble Beach sewer project "hanging in the balance."

"I think it is ridiculous of us to hire them to do inspections of our septic systems when the whole sewer project is really being driven by them in the first place," said Jackson. "It's mindboggling to me how we could have the Sauble sewer project up in the air with this same company and we are going to have them come in and do a septic reinspection program for us."

Genivar is the consulting firm hired by the town that two years ago recommended that if the town proceeds with sewers for Sauble Beach it begin with a \$ 27.8 million collection and treatment system that would serve 719 properties. The plan called for the system to be expanded over three subsequent phases to eventually include 2,435 lots.

The recommendation was eventually set aside to give council the opportunity to study the report and explore alternatives to the plan. A committee has since been set up to gather information to help council determine if sewers are needed at Sauble Beach.

But Coun. Jay Kirkland said the Sauble Beach sewer project and the septic re-inspection program are two separate issues and need to be treated that way.

"This is something totally different than the Sauble sewer issue," said Kirkland. "This is a septic re-inspection program for the Town of South Bruce Peninsula."

Kirkland said the town looked at hiring its own staff to do the work, but were unable to find people qualified. With the added cost of vehicles and additional office space, it was decided to go with an outside firm. Under a plan council approved in April, homeowners were to be charged \$100 for an inspection. They could also be required to have their tank pumped out and otherwise ensure their septic system can be properly inspected.

The proposal from Genivar, to complete a total of 4,689 inspections between Jan. 7, 2013 and Dec. 31, 2016, came in with a total cost of just under \$850,000, just over \$180 per household.

Of the four proposals received, Genivar was seen by staff as the most thorough and comprehensive and addressed the town's needs, chief building official Carol House said in her report to council on Tuesday.

Kirkland said the program has been in the works for a long time and it is time to finally get started on it.

"We tried to implement this program eight or nine years ago and I think even back in old Amabel (Township) they tried to implement a program," said Kirkland. "We finally got a program I think is going to work, it is going to be fair to everybody."

Kirkland said the town needs to know that the septic systems in the municipality are working properly.

"Do we have proper systems in our municipality and the neighbours need to know what the other neighbours are doing," Kirkland said.

The firm that would do the work is formerly Pryde Schropp McComb Inc. of Port Elgin, which was acquired by Genivar in 2010 and has done work for the municipality in the past, Kirkland said.

"This is a successful company which is a local company and a very good company. They have done a lot of good work for us at the dump and they have done a lot of good stuff in this municipality," said Kirkland. "Because their name is Genivar it doesn't mean they should be ill talked about by other council members."

Jackson said the fact the company has changed ownership doesn't change her opinion in any way about the decision.

"Maybe that company was independent at one time, but they are not anymore," said Jackson. "I think that for this council to go into muddy waters like that, we are going down the wrong road."