

Palgrave residents offer input on their community plans

By Bill Rea

Palgrave needs a bit of sprucing up, according to the input of some of its residents, but things are still looking pretty good.

The Town of Caledon is working on community improvement plans (CIP) in some of its villages and hamlet, holding a series of meetings to get input from residents, and about 20 of them were out for last week's session in Palgrave to offer their thoughts.

Bobby Gauthier, a senior planner with MMM?Group, explained that CIPs are already in place in Bolton and Caledon East. A CIP, he said, is ?a really common municipal planning tool,? adding there are more than 100 of them in place in Ontario. They can be put to various uses, such as downtown revitalization, promoting heritage conservation, encouraging brownfield redevelopment (such as involving contaminated properties like old gas stations) and economic development.

When such plans are established, Gauthier said the municipality can issue grants and loans to property owners and tenants to improve things. The Town is also enabled to acquire and improve lands.

Gauthier said CIPs come with visions, goals and objectives as well as setting out municipal leadership strategies to promote and administer them.

?We're very early in the project,? Gauthier told the audience.

He said things started in December, and there have been workshop sessions. There will be a report going to Town council later this month, with a background report and draft CIP being done in May. June will see more workshops, with a formal public information meeting being planned for September.

Gauthier said the two CIPs in place in town contain a pretty wide range of programs. The both have building facade and signage improvement grants available, as well as property and landscape improvement grants, energy efficiency retrofit grants, and planning and building application fee grants. The Bolton CIP also offers development charge grants, an environmental study grant program and a mixed-use construction and conservation grant program. The CIP?in Caledon East has a program for historic property improvement.

He added each CIP is supported by design guidelines.

Last week's meeting was to deal with CIP proposals for both Palgrave and Mono Mills, although just about everyone in the room said they were from Palgrave.

Gauthier said in both cases, they are looking within the settlement area boundaries, although he said they could be open to minor changes.

In Mono Mills, the traffic on Highway 9 means opportunities to attract customers to local businesses, but it also represents a barrier to movement of residents.

In Palgrave, he said the equestrian facility and how the community relates to it represents an opportunity. Problems include narrow sidewalks.

Gauthier commented that common issues include the need for design guidelines in the villages, threats of loss of history and character, and inconsistencies in zoning provisions.

Participants were divided into groups to discuss the issues.

The matters that were raised at the end included conditions in the area of the pub in Palgrave. There were also comments about the state of the gas station in the hamlet, although there were also those who said it's convenient to have the station there.

There were also calls for walkway connections within the village, such as a connection between the parking lot on the east side of Regional Road 50 (near the pond) to the parking lot at Palgrave Forest, on the other side of the road.

Some commented on the state of some of the roads in Palgrave, stating they were in bad repair and needed more sweeping. There were also calls to clean up graffiti near the fish ladder on the west side of the road.

There were comments about the signage in the area, including suggestions that the Caledon Healthy Community sign needs maintenance.

There were also calls to ensure the maintenance on the pond skating rink throughout winter.

When it comes to vision for the village, there were issues raised about the round-about on Regional Road 50 and whether it would impact on Palgrave. There were opinions that the hamlet has a nice streetscapes, with attractive facades on buildings along the main drag. There was also praise for the low light pollution in the area.

?We love the town the way it is,? one man commented.

There were also statements that the local variety store is an important part of town.

In terms of negatives, there were concerns with the intersections at Pine Avenue and the fact there are no medical offices in the

hamlet.

There were also calls for a community centre, with concerns that the equestrian facility might turn out to be a 'one-off.'