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Wellesley passes 2.99% tax increase

Councillors debate community donations, use of township savings

Scott Miller Cressman
Independent staff

Wellesley Township has settled on a 2.99 per cent tax increase for 2017, meaning the average homeowner will pay just shy of \$1,000 to the township from this year's property taxes — an increase of \$36.58 over 2016.

The township's staff and councillors met Jan. 9 and 11 to hammer out this year's \$7.5 million budget. As usual, their hopes for a low tax increase for Wellesley residents had to go head-to-head with an upward spiral of staff and administration expenses.

"We spend this money as if it's our own," said Rik Louwagie, the township's chief administrative officer, during a budget meeting at township headquarters on Lobsinger Line.

Some new expenses this year made budget bloat hard to avoid; Wellesley's health insurance company raised benefit costs by \$36,000 for the township's full-time employees.

"That was something that hit us hard and came right out of the blue," said Mayor Joe Nowak.

Beside that, Wellesley is also budgeting to pay tens of thousands of dollars more in staff wages and benefits for 2017, an inflation that's happening across nearly all departments.

Wellesley also has to spend \$78,000 in 2017 to start paying off the township's 2016 purchase of new recreation lands.

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SCOTT MILLER CRESSMAN, INDEPENDENT STAFF

After 10 years of ownership, Bev Finnegan is looking to pass the Blue Moon in Petersburg into new hands. She hopes the historic local landmark will remain true to its roots as a stagecoach stop.

New phase for the Blue Moon

Change coming with 169-year-old Petersburg landmark up for sale

Scott Miller Cressman
Independent staff

The historic Blue Moon restaurant in Petersburg is on the market, and owner Bev Finnegan is also cleaning out the back shelves by putting over 700 batches of restaurant items up for sale in an online auction closing Jan. 23.

The 169-year-old Wilmot landmark at Snyder's Road and Notre Dame Drive was quietly put on the market back in August, said Finnegan, who has owned and operated the establishment for the past 10 years.

She's not closing down the business — "I'm hearing all kinds of rumours," she said — just looking to sell the two-storey brick

inn, as well as the house and shed beside it, Finnegan said.

Interested buyers have toured the Blue Moon in recent months, Finnegan said, but there's no deal yet to sell the historic tavern. For the sake of her loyal customers, she's hoping that the restaurant they know and love will continue to operate as before once it's under new ownership.

"It's a beautiful old building," Finnegan said, who will also need a new home — she lives in the Blue Moon's upper rooms. But she said she's ready to move on, motivated by a chance to semi-retire, travel the world and do new things.

"I've been tied down a lot for 10 years," the proprietor said.

"There were a lot of fun times too ... I've really enjoyed it. And I've really loved the people and the staff and the building."

As she prepares to say goodbye, Finnegan is also cleaning out thousands of unused items from the Blue Moon's backrooms and storage spaces. Just before Christmas, she began listing some of the artifacts and old paraphernalia that had been squirreled away in several different rooms. All those antiques, restaurant supplies, and other items have been bundled into over 700 lots that are up for auction until Jan. 23 at www.sto-reys.ca.

Popular auction items include an antique cash register, a self-

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THE BAND PLAYED ON
Long-time New Hamburg musician hangs up his horn after six and a half decades

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NEXT STEP TO CLOSURE REVEALED

St. Agatha school saga continues next week with meeting to unveil next steps

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Events Calendar

1 JANUARY	14 FEBRUARY	17 MARCH	25 APRIL
13 MAY	24 JUNE	4 JULY	15 AUGUST
4 SEPTEMBER	31 OCTOBER	11 NOVEMBER	25 DECEMBER

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Thousands of Blue Moon items up for grabs

FROM front page playing piano, old beer signs, a slushy machine, an antique butter churn and a cast iron stove. There are also countless plates, bowls and glasses, including vintage Oktoberfest steins from the 1970s. Finnegan also has two older Porsches collecting dust in storage that she's hoping to list for sale too.

"There's some pretty cool stuff," she said. "There are some antique pieces. There were dishes from England and glassware from France," she said. All the items have been in storage, and are not currently used in the Blue Moon's dining rooms or bar.

On Jan. 20, potential

buyers can come to the Blue Moon to see the auction items for themselves.

The Blue Moon is one of Wilmot's many designated heritage properties.

The historic building currently listed for sale at \$1.2 million on the Waterloo-based commercial real estate company Coupal Markou.

The massive restaurant and banquet hall can host up to 572 customers in more than 12,000 square feet of space. It was originally built in 1848, one of many stage-coach stops that prospered when Huron Road was the highway between Goderich and Guelph. The front door still has the original lock made by Peter Williker, the

Petersburg blacksmith.

There was a dance hall in the 1920s, then the Blue Moon featured jazz music in the 1960s and 70s, and lately has again hosted many live musical acts.

"A lot of people have thanked me over the years for keeping it open," Finnegan said.

"There's so much potential here to do more."

In summer 2015, the Blue Moon launched a crowd-funding project to try to raise \$60,000 for a new roof. At the time, Finnegan mentioned that she had spent over \$300,000 on renovations and equipment updates since 2006.

Regional police getting new roadside drug test

FROM previous page ment tests, double what they did the previous year.

RIDE checks held in the region during the 2016 Christmas and New Year holidays resulted in 44 impaired driving arrests, with one of those ending in a drug impairment charge.

Police are expecting

change when Canada legalizes marijuana — something the federal government is looking at but has not yet implemented.

Waterloo Regional Police officers currently use sobriety tests to screen for both alcohol and drug impairment, and the force is awaiting new road-side saliva

screening technology that could simplify drug tests.

The devices are currently undergoing trials in pilot projects in Toronto, Vancouver and Halifax.

If the devices pass trials, communities can expect to see spikes in drug impaired driving reports, noted Lar-



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News in Brief

Region's green grants now open

Environmental projects across Waterloo Region can now apply for funding through the 2017 Region of Waterloo Community Environmental Fund.

The fund, established in 2011, provides grants to projects and organizations that are intended to promote and enhance the region's environment and natural resources.

For more information on which kind of projects are eligible to apply for the grant, or to download the application package, visit www.regionofwaterloo.ca/sustainability.

Applications are due by Jan. 6. Eligible projects could include research into environmental issues, promotion of sustainable actions or conservation of significant natural features in the region's urban or rural areas.

Sock it to them — 10,000 pairs of socks going to charity as Toasty Toes campaign far exceeds goal

Scott Miller Cressman
Independent staff

Over the past month, socks have piled up at Megan Hall's yellow-brick New Dundee home. Sized for babies, women or men, made of cotton, wool or acrylic, all types of fabric footwear have filled a rubber bin on Hall's porch to help a local charity.

Last week concluded the sock collection project, which saw the New Dundee community donate nearly 300 pairs of socks for the Toasty Toes campaign.

Toasty Toes was started three years ago by Sharon Gilroy-Dreher as a simple way to supply an in-demand item for homeless shelters and food banks that serve Waterloo Region.

"Socks are the number one needed item for homeless shelters and food banks, but the least donated item," said Hall. Agencies need socks year-round to help keep feet dry, warm, clean and protected from the elements.

This year, Gilroy-Dreher expanded Toasty Toes by asking workplaces across Waterloo Region to host their own collections. Over 40 businesses and institutions signed on, with the collection happening from Oct. 10 to Nov. 10.

But Hall, who is self-employed and often works from home, also wanted to get in on the action. "I chatted with my husband and kids and said 'why not do this in New Dundee?'," she said.

So Hall sent emails to as many

of her Wilmot neighbours as she could, then put out a bin on the porch of the Main Street home where she lives with her husband and kids.

Soon, New Dundee Public School was onboard and encouraging students' families to give. The New Dundee Optimists became champions too, and before long Hall had collected enough to fill two big rubber bins.

When she and her family counted on Friday, there were 278 pairs of socks for men, women and kids.

"We've had awesome response," she said. "I really had no idea how it would go in New Dundee. It's a relatively small community... I'm really happy with how it went."

Hall, will be dropping off around 600 pairs of socks this week at the Wilmot Family Resource Centre — her own 278, topped up with more from the region-wide collection.

"I'm so pleased that all of our socks will help those in need right here in our township," she told the Independent.

The sock drive in New Dundee is unique — it was the only one for Toasty Toes this year that was simply run by an individual and not linked to a business or organization, said Gilroy-Dreyer in an email. "Megan's collection is unique in that it is one person driving the collection for the entire community. She is awesome," said the Toasty Toes founder.

In its first year, Toasty Toes



SCOTT MILLER CRESSMAN, INDEPENDENT STAFF

Megan Hall has collected 278 pairs of socks given by her New Dundee neighbours, which will add to the total of more than 10,000 socks given to Waterloo Region homeless shelters and food banks this year through the Toasty Toes campaign.

collected 492 pairs of socks across Waterloo Region, said Gilroy-Dreher. Last year, it grew to 1,001 pairs. With the expansion in 2016, this third edition is expected to surpass 10,000 pairs — 10 times what the campaign collected last year — although final numbers are still coming in.

"My heart is full — the generosity of our community has been awesome," said Gilroy-Dreher.

In past years, the socks went to the the Bridges Shelter in

Cambridge, House of Friendship's men's hostel in Kitchener, Marillac Place, the ONEROOF program and St John's Soup Kitchen, among others — this is the first year for the Wilmot Family Resource Centre.

A pair of new socks makes a big difference to residents of shelters, people experiencing homelessness and those served by local soup kitchens and food banks, according to Gilroy-Dreyer's campaign.

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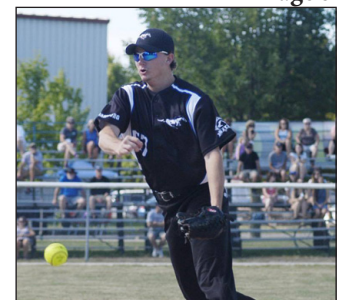
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SUBMITTED PHOTOS



FALL FAIR FEVER
Residents, organizers prepare for New Hamburg Fall Fair
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MULTI-SPORT MASTER
Softball world champion Randerson enters last junior hockey season
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Organizers of the Wilmot Terry Fox run are close to a new fundraising record, thanks to various fundraising events throughout the year to support cancer research.

Terry Fox Run on pace to break fundraising record

Organizers took holistic approach to fundraising for cancer treatment through different events

Chris Thomson
Independent staff

When the 2017 Wilmot Terry Fox Run kicks off this Sunday at 12:30 p.m. in Norm S. Hill Park, it won't just mark the start of the race, but the end of this year's marathon of fundraising.

The entire 2017 calendar saw a number of different events across the township, resulting in the Run being on pace to break their fundraising record. Yet the first fundraising event dates back to February, when Levetto Italian Restaurant in Baden (now Mercer Mercato) donated their en-

tire day of profits to the foundation.

"We've seen tremendous support from businesses across the area," said run organizer Nigel Gordijk. "We want to get as many people involved as we can, and with businesses we have a platform for both monetary support and outreach to the community."

From raffles at Bitte Schön Brahaus and Baden Coffee, to a booth at Moparfest, to large donations from Meme's Café and Angie's Kitchen to a name a few, the Terry Fox Run has seen support pouring in across the township. Fitting, as this is now the third year since the name was changed from "New Hamburg"

to "Wilmot."

"The name change seemed like the right and obvious thing to do," said organizer Cheryl Gordijk. "We always saw a lot of support coming in from outside New Hamburg, so it just made sense to represent as many people in the area as possible. Now, we have more people and businesses calling us than ever."

Along with the widened geographical range of awareness, the Run also prides itself on a strong social media platform, which supporting businesses help with as well.

CONTINUED on Page 4

The Westhill
BY SIFTON

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FROM front page

Yet there might be some other factors at play when it comes to explaining the increased fundraising totals this year.

"I'm not sure if it's the Canadian pride people are feeling with it being the 150th anniversary, the emotional response to the name Terry Fox or the cause, people making a connection to those in the community, or just them seeing all the events we've had going on," said Cheryl. "It might be a combination of all those things, but regardless, we have seen a big increase this year."

One of the events people might have seen in association with the Run was the Marathon of Shows: a series of concerts in downtown New Hamburg businesses, with admission by donation. Another might have been a meet and greet just a few short weeks ago with Fred Fox: Terry's brother.

There are also more fundraising events still to come before the run. On Saturday there will be a "BBQ for Terry" at Sobey's in New Hamburg from 11-3, while the Wilmot Terry Fox Run silent auction will take place in the old arena during the Fall Fair.

From 10 a.m. to noon on Sunday, Scran & Dran will be serving "Breakfast for Terry." Registration and opening ceremonies for the Wilmot Terry Fox Run start at 12:30 p.m., with everyone setting off at 1:45 p.m.

Afterwards, run participants are invited back to the Fall Fair, and will be provided free entry courtesy of the Wilmot Agriculture Society.

You can register or donate online at www.wilmotterryfox.ca/ join/, or pick up a pledge sheet at businesses throughout Wilmot.

Eighty-four cents of every dollar raised by the Terry Fox Run and associated fundraisers goes directly to cancer research.



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