



McIntosh issue deferred again

By VALERIE MACDONALD, NORTHUMBERLAND TODAY

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HAMILTON TOWNSHIP -- The events precipitated by the surprise termination of Hamilton Township's chief administration officer on April 19 -- and rift the in the township council over the firing -- influence municipal operations.

A bylaw to rescind the two previous bylaws appointing township resident Betty McIntosh to the positions of clerk, deputy treasurer and CAO was deferred at the June 21 meeting of township council to July 5, keeping the controversy alive in both the council chambers and in the public eye.

Tuesday was the second time the bylaw has been on the council agenda. The three council members who voted in April to oust McIntosh without notice and public explanation -- Deputy Mayor Isobel Hie and Councillors Donna Cane and John Davison -- initially opposed putting the discussion into closed session during Tuesday's regular council session. At one point, Mayor Mark Lovshin admonished them, saying he couldn't proceed without the adoption of the agenda and that there were possible legal repercussions if the rescinding bylaw matter were not moved into closed session. At that point in the meeting, only he and Councillor Gary Woods supported the in-camera discussion over the bylaws.

Cole changed her mind and supported the motion after receiving assurances that the outcome of the decision would be made in open council after that.

After Tuesday afternoon's in-camera meeting, Lovshin told Northumberland Today that the matter had been deferred, as requested and based on legal advice, until July 5. He said he could not reveal any other information.

The township's human resources representative, Beth Thompson, confirmed McIntosh is continuing to receive her bi-weekly cheques from the municipality.

Asked if this would continue until the appointment bylaws were rescinded, Lovshin replied, "That depends on the (terms of the) settlement" that is being worked out with McIntosh.

In a separate motion put forward by Woods and supported by Lovshin -but which Cole, Hie and Davison voted down -all of the costs, direct and indirect, associated with stripping McIntosh of her positions of employment with the township would have been recorded separately, made available to the public and reported quarterly every year.

Woods said he made the motion because of the anticipated cost and use of staff time due to the many Freedom of Information requests anticipated from the public over the unprecedented manner in which McIntosh was let go.

In another related action, council unanimously appointed former Hope Township administrator and Port Hope staffer Fran Aird to the position of acting treasurer/tax collector while the employee currently in that position is on medical leave. Without McIntosh, who was the township's deputy treasurer as well as CAO, the increase in stress caused the medical leave, Lovshin said during a media conference held in late-April announcing the 3/2 vote to oust McIntosh.

The atmosphere in the Hamilton Township council chambers was very tense throughout Tuesday's meeting.

Members of the public who awaited the outcome of council's in-camera session learned that the vote and decision about rescinding the bylaws concerning McIntosh's employment were completed without re-opening the council chambers, so they could not witness what was to be the public portion of that process.

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