

There has been ongoing debate and extensive discussion regarding the operation of the Otter Lake Landfill facility.

Earlier this year, Council asked for a review of the operation of the facility. This review was to identify efficiencies, which simply means cost savings. The recommendations brought forward were to eliminate the Front End Processor (FEP) and Waste Stabilization Facility (WSF). These two operations are designed to allow only inert materials into the landfill. The FEP also removes recyclable material and other waste not suited for Otter Lake. Other recommendations included, but were not limited to, extending the life of the landfill by 17 - 23 years and increasing the height by 15 meters, or about 49 feet.

From an economic perspective, increasing the height and life of the landfill would save money. The infrastructure is in place, and this would also negate the need to site a new landfill for years to come.

However, there is one extremely significant component of this entire process that has been ignored; that being, an agreement is in place with the community that ensures environmental protection. The FEP and WSF are integral components of environmental protection. Regardless of any potential cost savings, an agreement is to be honoured.

During Council meetings, I have done my best to get a better understanding of the process we have followed. One particularly puzzling aspect of this is that a Consultant's report was prepared, with recommendations. I would have expected that public consultation would have been part of the Consultant's work. It would appear that the conclusions have been drawn, and any public consultation would be moot!

In subsequent meetings, Deputy Mayor Rankin and I introduced additional information. The reaction to this material was odd, to say the least. We presented letters from the Provincial Minister of the Environment, the leader of the opposition and the leader of the PC. All three stated clearly that no changes would be permitted to the landfill. These letters were dismissed as being "politically motivated". We also presented a motion from Halifax County Council banning organics from our landfill. We were told it would be taken under advisement.

Perhaps the most intriguing answer of all was a non-answer. I simply asked the following, "If the FEP is eliminated, and someone puts potato peelings in a green garbage bag, what happens to the potato peelings?" I am still waiting for an answer.

The crux of this matter is one of integrity. Time will tell as to how this pans out.

As you may already know, HRM's Curbside Give-Away Weekend is coming up this June 8th and 9th. This is an opportunity for residents to clear out outgrown and under-used household items and a great way to rethink garbage and protect our environment. The goal of this event is to reduce the amount of garbage that may otherwise end up in HRM's landfill by diverting unwanted items for re-use.

Re-using and recycling household items, instead of discarding them, reduces pressures on our municipal facilities, and is a great way to not only rid yourself of under-used items, but to find some great treasures of your own! Your participation in the event will help maximize landfill space by extending the lifecycle of items and making them available for reuse.

For more information on the Curbside Give-Away event, check out the HRM website at: <http://www.halifax.ca/wrms/CGAW.html> or call the HRM Citizen Contact Centre at 3-1-1.

I am certain that most, if not all who have read my columns are familiar with the discussions and debate at Council regarding cats. In early May, I introduced a motion to give the SPCA a grant of \$40,000 to help with a Spay and Neuter program. This will help with the issue of feral cats. This program will not adversely affect existing veterinary clinics, which was a concern that was raised. This would not have been possible if not for the work of Dr. Hugh Chisholm and others who worked tirelessly to bring this forward. My thanks go out to them and to all who made this possible.

I am pleased to advise that the Prospect Road Business Commission (PRBC) has a newly elected Executive and will be meeting the third Wednesday of the month at the Prospect Road Community Centre. The PRBC is a great way to increase the profile of local businesses.

As summer quickly approaches, there will be many school and community events to attend. These fairs and festivals are great for fundraisers and bring communities together. As always, I will do my best to attend as many as possible. I hope to see you at a few of them.

Summer also brings graduations, grading and summer vacation. Whether you are moving up from one grade to another or graduating High School, you should be very proud of your accomplishments. I offer a final thought to those of you graduating from High School; whether you are planning on attending University, Community College or joining the work force, simply do your very best. Everything else will fall into place.