

County close to agreement on contentious road costs

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WELLINGTON COUNTY — The county is close to settling a long-standing dispute with a municipal neighbour over who is responsible for approximately \$3 million in work on a boundary road.

County councillors Thursday were to consider approving minutes of settlement between the county, Peel Region and two aggregate companies. The issue concerns the reconstruction of a portion of Winston Churchill Boulevard, also known as the Erin-Caledon Townline.

During 2007, the county paid for the rebuilding of a three-kilometre stretch of the road. In keeping with boundary road agreements in place between the municipal neighbours, Wellington sent Peel a bill for half of the work.

The region paid \$378,000 in early 2007, but halted further payments after two residents uncovered decades-old gravel pit license documents which suggest two aggregate companies in the area should have paid to rebuild the road.

The county later asked the Ministry of Natural Resources, which administers pit licenses, to step in and help sort the matter out.

“The agreement is very, very close to being done,” Wellington County Warden Joanne Ross-Zuj said Thursday. “It’s with our lawyers.”

Ross-Zuj said a series of meetings were held involving representatives from the county, Peel Region, the aggregate companies and the province “but it came down to legal discussions between Peel and the county,” Ross-Zuj said.

“We’ve been negotiating a settlement to avoid litigation,” the warden said. “We wanted to reach an agreement so we can recoup our costs.”

She confirmed she still expects this to happen.

Ross-Zuj said the county “regarded this (road work) as our responsibility” and had no idea about the old agreement laying responsibility for the work at the feet of the aggregate companies. But she noted given the passage of time, a change in ownership of the companies and a change in the municipal structure of the county it would not be likely the county could force the companies to pick up the tab.

Greg Sweetnam, a spokesperson for James Dick Aggregates, said his company and the two municipalities “are in complete agreement” about how to resolve the matter, though he did not want to discuss the terms until everyone had signed off.

“I’d prefer to wait until the ink is dry but I believe it’s something we can all live with,” Sweetnam said. “That’s about as much as I should say at this point.”

Representatives from Peel Region were not available for comment Thursday.