

LOCAL/REGION

Port councillor wants rain barrel program instituted

BY MARK TAYTI
TRIBUNE STAFF
PORT COLBORNE

It was raining buckets in Port Colborne Friday but Coun. Frank DiBartolomeo wasn't singing "rain, rain, go away."

The Ward 2 councillor is singing a different tune that he hopes the whole community can join in on.

At a recent meeting of council, DiBartolomeo pitched the idea of a rain barrel program to assist in water conservation efforts in the city. He is now awaiting a staff report on the merits of a recycling program that he believes is long overdue.

To encourage participation, DiBartolomeo would ultimately like to see the city get involved in a rain barrel subsidy program – whereby the city would help residents with the cost of purchasing the barrels.

Other communities are already running ahead of Port Colborne in their efforts to introduce the low-tech solution to cutting water costs.

"People have been collecting rain water for 2,000 years," DiBartolomeo said Friday. "It's not new."

He believes that a rain barrel pro-



DIBARTOLOMEO

gram that includes an educational component has great chances for success in Port Colborne.

"We need to educate people and give them incentives," he said. "I'm hoping staff comes back with a positive report and then, with council's endorsement, we can have something to take to the next budget deliberations. I would like to see the city have a rain barrel recycling program in place for 2008."

DiBartolomeo said the program would not only lower water bills for individual residents, but it also saves the region on the cost of delivering water to the city. Those costs are charged back to the municipality.

He said one inch of water on a

1,000-square-foot roof produces 623 gallons of water. To make the conversion, one millimeter of water on one square metre of roof yields a litre of water.

"People say there is water all around us but only 2 1/2 per cent of the world's water is fresh water and it still needs to be treated. All our drinking water comes with a cost and I don't see any relief in water costs in the future."

He said there are many advantages to something as simple as setting up a rain barrel in your back yard.

"The biggest advantage is that rain water is free," he said. "It also contains nutrients that are good for your lawn and garden."

DiBartolomeo said he has been collecting rain water on his property for the past seven years.

Like other recycling efforts, DiBartolomeo said rain water collection won't happen overnight.

He said it has taken years for people to get in the habit of recycling but now most people do participate.

"I don't think the majority of people see water as a commodity," he said. "We should not be using drinking water to water our gardens."



STAFF PHOTO MAGGIE RIOPELLE

Mayor Damian Goulbourne met with Second World War veteran Harry Watts at city hall yesterday, as part of the Coast to Coast Veterans Video Awareness Tour.

Second World War vet adds his story to video diary

TRIBUNE STAFF
WELLAND

The Friends of Veterans Canada historic ride, Coast to Coast Veterans Video Awareness Tour, made a stop in Welland.

Second World War veteran Harry Watts, who grew up in the Welland area, met with Mayor Damian Goulbourne on the steps of the civic square to tell his story and contribute to the video diary of veterans which will be included with the veterans video library.

Veterans' stories will be used as a learning tool for youth and ensure

Canadians always remember the sacrifices made for freedom.

Watts was honoured by the mayor with recognition for his years of service in Italy and Holland. He also presented the mayor with a gift of his own, a book called The Dispatch Rider, which chronicles Watts' service in his own words.

Watts now resides in Kitchener. Watts will also be at the Canadian Biker Build Off event at the Niagara Regional Exhibition grounds with his classic Harley Davidson and his books for sale. For more information on the video tour, visit www.friendsofveterans.ca.

QUICK READ

ST. KITTS WOMAN CHARGED WITH FRAUD

TRIBUNE STAFF
ST. CATHARINES

Presenting forged documents to two cash-advance businesses has resulted in the arrest of a 23-year-old St. Catharines woman.

Niagara Regional Police say in March a female entered two different payday cash advance businesses in St. Catharines and indicated that she was employed on a full-time basis and had an active bank account.

Believing the documentation was genuine, both stores gave the woman cash, expecting her to pay back at a later date.

When the money wasn't repaid, the business tried to locate the woman but discovered contact information was false.

A central fraud unit investigation ended in an arrest Thursday.

Amanda Lauzon is charged with two counts of fraud under \$5,000 and two counts of uttering a forged document.

She is to appear in court next month.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER BADLY INJURED

TRIBUNE STAFF
WEST LINCOLN

A 37-year-old construction worker who fell four metres from a roof at a residential building site here Thursday was taken to hospital with what police called potentially life-threatening injuries.

The incident is being investigated by the Ministry of Labour.

Niagara Regional Police are withholding the identity of the injured West Lincoln resident.

The man was working on a Sixteen Road job home at about 10:30 a.m. when he lost his balance, fell from the roof and landed on the ground striking his head and neck.

Co-workers called 911.

The injured man was taken by ambulance to St. Catharines General Hospital.

Police last listed his condition as stable.

They do not anticipate laying criminal charges.

Foul play is not suspected.



STAFF PHOTO GREG FURMINGER

YOUTH GROUP PERFORMS

Members of the Knox Presbyterian Church Eyes on YOU (Young and Old United) youth group – Mikhail Gohm, Meghan Gray, Danielle Baninga – perform during a regular seniors vacation bible school visit at the region's Woodlands of Sunset seniors home on South Pelham Road, last night.

Region wants NRP budget forecast by end of October

BY MONIQUE BEECH
OSPREY NEWS NETWORK
ST. CATHARINES

A Niagara Region senior staffer offered a little budgetary guidance to Niagara's police force Thursday in an effort to avoid clashes come budget crunch time next winter.

Last year, regional staff were left to guess what Niagara's police expenses might be for 2007, said John Bergsma, commissioner of corporate services.

Instead, the region would like the police force to submit its estimated budget expenses for 2008 by the end of October – just like all other regional departments.

"We'd rather the police forecast their budget as opposed to (using) our estimates," Bergsma told police services board members during Thursday morning.

It's all part of an effort by the region to employ a top-down approach to budget planning.

Using a series of regional demographic data, regional staff expect the

overall budget increase for 2008 to be 3.4 per cent.

The goal is for regional departments to tighten their belts and work within the target.

But police services board chairman Larry Iggulden said the NRP must provide a set level of service, as mandated by Queen's Park, and doesn't have much financial wiggle room.

A business plan for the police service must first be set, with money flowing accordingly, Iggulden said.

"I'm uncomfortable with a target and having our services match a target," Iggulden said.

This year, the NRP's operating budget increased by 4.26 per cent over the 2006 budget. Of the \$106.7 million spent, most went toward personnel costs.

Bergsma said other regional departments are also required to provide essential services by the province.

If the police provided their forecast

budget early on and it exceeded 3.4 per cent, regional staff may be able to build in the extra cost.

Police services board member Mal Woodhouse said regional council often believes the NRP acts in "isolation" without care for the region's overall needs.

Providing budget information early on offers the NRP a chance to educate regional councillors on police expenditures, Woodhouse said.

"It's better than going in after the fact and trying to justify the actions we must take," Woodhouse said.

NRP police Chief Wendy Southall said she recognized the region's funding challenges, and vowed to work toward the October preliminary budget deadline.

But Southall added the force has many of its own challenges: paying rising salary expenses, policing the border, casinos and millions of tourists each year.

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Port Colborne Satellite Office

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malonj@parl.gc.ca



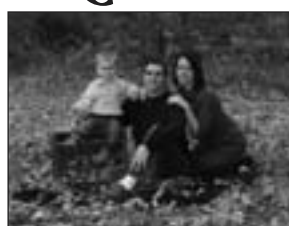
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