

TOP STORIES:

Bala Falls permit objections fail

BY ALISON BROWNLEE

Bala business owner Trish Petrie says construction at a proposed hydro project site this summer could threaten the future of her clothing shop.

"I do not want our business to end up like the grocery store that used to be in the exact location," Petrie told the District of Muskoka engineering and public works committee on May 21. "They were forced into bankruptcy because of construction in Bala at that time."

Swift River Energy Limited has proposed a small hydro project for Bala

■ Continued on page 5

Fear of violence, says Wahta local

BY KELLY MCSHANE

Something smells fishy in Wahta.

"The protesters won't admit they did it, but someone dumped a bunch of dead fish and cut the phone lines at the old band office," said Cal White, a resident of Wahta Mohawk Territory who is leading a grassroots campaign in support of the current council, which is the focus of a protest by a group of local residents calling themselves Wahta Community Fire.

In a call for council transparency and democratic process, the group closed off access to the reserve's administration building on May 6, forcing council to use the former band office instead.

"Everybody is worried this is going to lead to violence," said White. "I have no sympathy for the protesters."

The protest group alleges following the March election of current council, the newly appointed council mem-

■ Continued on page 5

Horrific high school musical debuts next week



OUT OF CONTROL: A blood-thirsty plant has its grip on Nick Sluyk, a Grade 12 student at Gravenhurst High School, who plays Seymour in the school's production of *The Little Shop of Horrors*. The play will be performed June 4 and 5 at the high school. (Photo by Kim Good)

High school performs 'Little Shop of Horrors'

BY KIM GOOD

Take a story of love and greed set to a soundtrack of pop music, add in a blood-thirsty plant or two, and it can only mean one thing: the cult classic *The Little Shop of Horrors* is coming to Gravenhurst.

Performed by students at Gravenhurst High School, drama teacher Earl Sacrey and music teacher Leanne Edwards have joined forces to produce the first musical from the school in many years.

"Everyone here has been involved in it,"

said Sacrey. "It's been a lot of teachers and a lot of students coming together and we're really excited."

For those not familiar with the plot, the main character Seymour (Nick Sluyk) works in a struggling floral shop on skid row, but one day happens upon a plant that no one has ever seen before. He and the shop's owner Mr. Mushnik (Josh Young) stand to make a lot of money if Seymour can keep the plant alive.

Unfortunately, Seymour discovers the

plant thrives on human blood.

Given the chance for fame, fortune and even the girl of his dreams, Seymour does what's necessary to nourish his one chance at happiness.

"It's kind of a Faustian deal," explained Sacrey, "where he starts feeding the plant progressively more of himself — pricking his fingers and slitting his wrists — to feed it blood and when it gets hungrier and hungrier and bigger and bigger, he grows

■ Continued on page 5

District felt they had little choice but to approve hydro project permits —

■ *Continued from front page*

Falls, despite strong opposition from many residents, cottagers and business owners.

The issue landed on the district committee's table last week because the company wants entrance permits onto Highway 169 for two properties related to the project.

A permanent entrance has been requested for the Ministry of Natural Resources property where the project will be built, while a temporary entrance has been requested for a staging area in Margaret Burgess Park.

Heavy equipment could arrive on site as soon as the permits are granted and site preparation could soon follow.

Petrie asked committee members to deny the company's entrance permit applications or defer consideration until a judicial

review appeal was completed and all other necessary project approvals were in order.

"I think it's reasonable to ask that you will not just rubber-stamp these entrance applications," she said. "I also believe it is reasonable to expect you to be looking out for the best interest of the town."

There were 10 other deputations at the meeting by residents, business owners, the Moon River Property Owners' Association and the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario, as well as Swift River.

Karen McGhee, an engineer with Swift River, said the company was willing to submit securities as financial protection to the district regarding road conditions. She noted the east sidewalk would remain open for pedestrians throughout construction.

She said the company hoped to begin construction in late summer or early fall, though site preparation and road widening could take place beforehand. The road widening, which requires another permit, would add a third lane to ease traffic congestion. The township has strongly opposed it.

Tony White, commissioner of engineering and public works, said the district had little choice than to approve the entrance permits.

The Green Energy Act regulates much of

the project, he said, which takes a lot of the power out of the district's hands.

White said the issue was a landowner requesting access to a district road. He said denying access to property could "open the door to legal action."

After debating the issue for more than two hours, entrance permits were approved for both sites effective Oct. 20, following the Bala Cranberry Festival, while the road widening was refused. District council must ratify the decision in June for it to take effect.

Community Fire hopeful for meeting —

■ *Continued from front page*

bers rejected the Administration Code and Financial Code developed with community input over the course of two years.

"The new council coming in is allowed to make changes," said White. "What they passed during their term doesn't have to stand for all eternity."

White has spoken out previously against Community Fire saying their protest is merely sour grapes. The group includes current Wahta councillor Stuart Lane, who also sat on the previous council, and former chief candidate Tim Thompson, who

lost to current chief Philip Franks.

When asked about the claim members of Wahta Community Fire dumped the dead fish and cut the phone lines, Lane said he was aware of the allegations.

"The first, regarding the fish, could have been anyone," he responded in an email. "The second, about the phone lines, was a technical problem as far as I know."

Lane said the protest would continue until council discontinues its administrative work.

"Hopefully a meeting will occur within the next couple of days," he said.

'Little Shop of Horrors' June 4 and 5 —

■ *Continued from front page*

more and more famous, but it demands more and more sacrifice and he starts feeding it pieces of people and then eventually his friends and neighbours."

The main actors in the core cast of 12 students are experienced performers. The lead actress, Alexandra Parry, who plays Audrey, has trained for the last three years in the theatre program at the Stratford Shakespeare Festival. She and the lead actor, Sluyk, are enjoying *The Little Shop of Horrors* for the unexpected twists, both in plot and in its genre.

"It's a little bit different," said Parry. "It's not exactly a mainstream musical and it's not exactly one where the hero wins in the end."

"I like how you get all these different

types of characters," added Sluyk. "Then you have different songs that are more serious, and then others that are lighthearted, but sort of add to the whole fun and theme of the musical, but they're still relevant."

The music is '50s and '60s pop-rock, complete with a Greek chorus of backup singers.

"It's a counterpoint," said Sacrey. "You've got this bloody plot line, but this really kind of bubble gummy 'little shop, little shop of horrors' going on as well ... so the music is a lot of fun and I think even people who don't enjoy the darker undertones will enjoy the light, fun music."

The play will be performed at the high school on June 4 and 5 at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$10 or pay what you can. For more information, call 705-687-2283.