

Town launches study of new well site to determine if it meets water supply needs

By Mike Baker

The Town of Orangeville has initiated an environmental assessment study of the recently purchased Pullen Well to determine whether it holds enough capacity to meet the municipality's future water supply needs.

Following an almost decade-long debate, Orangeville Council agreed, back in February, to pay Amaranth Township \$500,000 for the disputed land, which includes a well drilled by developers Hamount Investments and LaurelPark Investments for a subdivision that was never built.

Orangeville had spent years attempting to acquire the Pullen Well in order to expand its municipal drinking water supply. Currently, the Town has 12 municipal water supply wells but has identified a need to increase that supply to accommodate anticipated growth in the area. The Town's official plan identifies the build-out population as 36,490.

"We will, ultimately, need a water supply that can support this population," said Doug Jones, the Town's General Manager of Infrastructure Services.

The Municipal Class Environmental Assessment process will further define the need for additional water supply, consider and evaluate alternative solutions to resolve the problem, assess the potential impacts of the preferred solution (Pullen Well site) and identify measures to lessen any potential adverse impacts. The process will provide members of the public and interested parties with opportunities to provide input at key stages of the study. Staff anticipates the study will be completed within a year.

In a report provided to Council shortly after the turn of the new year, Mr. Jones stated that, as of 2018, the Town's total available supply capacity from its 12 wells was 15,032 cubic metres per day. Mr. Jones noted the maximum one-day flow in 2018 was 14,037 cubic metres, with the average daily flow 9,845 cubic metres. As of the Town's most recent statistics, the municipality provides water to 29,876 residents in 11,065 households.

As of Jan. 1, 2019, the calculated uncommitted reserve capacity was 933 cubic metres per day. This uncommitted volume, Mr. Jones states, could serve approximately 777 additional residential units.

"However, it must be noted this is a theoretical capacity only, and could change quickly, unexpectedly and significantly as a result of changes in the performance or, or water quality from, one of the nine well fields," Mr. Jones wrote in his report to Council.

While the population and number of households in town has increased at a steady rate in recent years, Mr. Jones noted the total water usage in Orangeville has dropped significantly since 2003.

Mr. Jones also noted the available water supply from the Town's 12 supply wells has decreased by approximately 800 cubic metres per day over the past year.

"This is due to the turbidity issues encountered at Well 6 in fall 2018. This well was rehabilitated, but is currently able to sustainably produce only half of its permitted capacity," Mr. Jones stated. "Staff continue to monitor Well 6 and will increase the rehabilitation schedule to ensure this well remains operational."

Looking at the long-term reduction in per-capita water demand over the past 15 years, Mr. Jones attributed it almost entirely to the implementation of the Town's universal metering program in 2003.

While the Town is eager to learn the capacity of the Pullen Well site, Mr. Jones says there is currently capacity available in the water supply system to service additional residential units in 2019. He did, however, recommend that any additional allocation of the

remaining available water supply capacity be evaluated on a case-by-case basis for the remainder of the year.

The Town will host a Public Information Centre to meet with people, present project information, answer questions and hear concerns before this process is complete. Details regarding that event will be provided at a future date. The project team can be reached at hmcginnity@orangeville.ca, or Stephen.dibiase@stantec.com.