

## Mono Council approves draft proposal for Pollinator Reserve



By Tabitha Wells

A draft proposal to create a Pollinator Reserve in Mono at a property in Hockley was passed unanimously at Mono Council's last meeting.

The proposal, which was brought before council by councillors Ralph Manktelow and Sharon Martin, must be prepared to submit to the Land Stewardship and Habitat Restoration (MNRF) Grant Program by December 2. The proposal will include a request for a \$20,000 grant from the MNRF to help with the project.

The goal of the reserve is to help preserve and enhance the natural pollinator environment in Mono, and both councillors felt the property they are applying under provides an ideal setting for this kind of project.

There is a stream already on the property that is currently in the process of being rehabilitated by the Headwaters Streams Committee, which creates an opportunity to plant appropriate native plants in the right environment for them to thrive.

Currently, Pollinator Reserves have been successfully executed in both Guelph and Waterloo, and with Mono's drive for green space, the project would fall in line with those goals.

"This is something that could just keep growing," said Councillor Martin. "We can start with half an acre, and move out from there. I think it's an ideal location, particularly with the developments from the streams committee. I think they marry very well."

The functions of this kind of site mainly serve to be a pollinator-friendly space, where flowers used by pollinators can grow and those same pollinators (including bees, butterflies, beetles and moths) could live. But it would also serve as an educational site, developed to raise public awareness about the importance of insect pollinators to both the ecology and food chain, as well as explain the pollination process and emphasize the threats to pollinators.

Councillor Fred Nix, who sits on the Headwaters Streams Committee, also felt the marriage of the two projects would be a positive one, adding some suggestions.

"We're finally on phase three of the project, and the stream will be on the western side, leaving a land block behind it," he said. "[If] we could get Public Works to fill it, we could have the opportunity to create either a beautiful wetland, make it part of the garden, or allow it to reseed itself."

He added "Maybe, we could even put a foot path through there?"

The footpath would serve as a way to help make the area one that people could also just go out to enjoy the quiet, natural environment, whether it's to spend time in nature, read, or any number of quiet, outdoor activities.

The garden would be taken care of by volunteer groups, hopefully with a committee or board, led by Councillors Manktelow and Martin.

The area would be designed to require minimal upkeep, weed or pest control however, as it would be built to be a natural habitat rather than an orderly flower garden.

"I see so much potential with this," said Councillor Manktelow. "We could have a very low level parking area, using the back of the laneway for about half a dozen cars."

Should the application be approved, the garden will feature a diverse selection of plants, such as tree shrubs and flowering plants which provide nectar and pollen from spring to fall, species of flowering plants and grasses native to southern Ontario, as well as pollinator nesting areas.

The draft proposal states: "Growing areas will be interspersed with natural walkways with sitting benches. Walkways will allow you to watch pollinators at work. Labels will identify the trees and shrubs. Sitting benches will allow a spot for contemplation and observation," and adds that the preserve should also attract songbirds and other wildlife.

In order to receive the grant, the Town of Mono must provide some funding, as well as some kind of funding 'in-kind'. The current breakdown in the proposal has \$5000 from the Town of Mono, plus \$15,000 of in-kind volunteer hours, consisting of 715 hours donated by volunteers at a 'rate' of \$20/h.

Once they are able to move forward with the process, the property will take a number of years to develop.

The first stage of the 4.2-acre project will involve only 0.5 acres, and it is predicted that the first year will be utilized as a learning year so that the volunteer group can develop their skills, organization and planting procedures.

A motion passed by Council provides that Councillors Manktelow and Martin would consult with Mike Dunmore, Director of Public Works, to fill out the application and submit it before the Dec. 2 deadline.