

## Mono council opts for morning meetings

By JAMES MATTHEWS

Mono town council meetings will take place during business hours as opposed to evenings.

Councillor Ralph Manktelow proposed during council's public meeting Jan. 10 that meetings return to taking place during business hours. Some issues of particular public interest could still be held in the evening, he said.

"My observation is that almost everyone's brain function is better in the morning," he said. "There's a good chance that we will be more engaged and our meetings will provide better governance."

Coun. Melinda Davie said the timing of Manktelow's motion is interesting given that council received an email from a resident lobbying for evening meetings.

Mayor John Creelman said basically every meeting was during business hours when he first joined council in 1991.

"The joke was that it corresponded with being able to have a free meal called lunch," Creelman said.

Davie said leaving the house is preferable during daylight hours as opposed to the evening's cold darkness.

Coun. Elaine Capes suggested council ask staff when they'd prefer council meetings to take place.

Mark Early, the town's chief administrative officer, said it's his understanding that staff would be agreeable to morning meetings.

"We're here in the office anyway," he said. "It doesn't create a situation where we have time to lose."

Departmental directors who attend evening meetings are compensated with time off the following day. Daytime meetings would mean staff are away from the town hall less.

"Having meetings through the day, certainly, is a benefit to the staff," Early said. "You're just more alert. You haven't put in a full day to go to a night meeting."

Davie said the resident's email also suggested holding council meetings at a different venue would increase citizen engagement.

You'd think resident engagement would benefit from having meetings broadcasted live on the internet, she said.

"I don't understand why people aren't availing of tuning in," Davie said.

She said people who would like to attend a meeting in the public gallery would not be able to during business hours if they have to work.

Manktelow said council meetings have time set aside for residents to submit or ask questions. Further, he said, meetings are accessible on the internet long after they've taken place.

"We've improved things an awful lot in terms of citizen engagement," he said.

Morning meetings won't harm citizen engagement at all, he said.

Creelman said there's no guarantee holding council meetings in other venues will increase citizen engagement.