

Vinyl stays on lighthouse for now

Citizens upset with "desecration"

By Kiel Edge

For a building designed to pierce through fog and make travel clearer, things have become rather foggy around the Kincardine lighthouse.

Four delegations made presentations June 18 to Kincardine council. The speakers want to see the building returned to its original condition. Citizens are upset with the decision to put vinyl siding and windows on the landmark.

"It's been destroyed," said Jane Rigby, a member of Heritage Kincardine, after the meeting. "No one consulted with the people who are aware (of the history)."

Council issued a tender April 16 to replace the lighthouse tower's cedar shingles with white vinyl. The repairs include replacing the original windows with vinyl ones.

According to Heritage Kincardine, the new windows are unacceptable. The originals were four-on-four glass and a "reveal" held them against the tower. The red reveal is one of the lighthouse's signature features.

The new windows are flush with the tower. No reveals remain on the refurbished tower.

"We have lost key architectural elements of the...symbol," Rigby told council. "The original siding on the tower is gone after 125 plus years."

Rigby said council should have consulted Heritage Kincardine before starting the repairs. The committee is there as a resource for council to use on this type of decision, she said.

"This should have come to us and it didn't. Use us," she said. "We wish to apologize for not being pro-active in the case, however, like many others in the municipality we were lulled...into believing (the lighthouse) would never be desecrated. We were wrong."

Karen Ribey of the Bruce Township Historical Society gave a brief history of the lighthouse and explained its unique role in the municipality's history. Former mayor Glenn Sutton presented a number of solutions to restore the lighthouse to its original look.

The delegations were unanimous in their request for council to stop the current repairs and take immediate steps to preserve the building's exterior.

"What was taken off should go back on," Sutton said. "The average person would expect some kind of wooden structure."

Water leakage inside the lighthouse forced public works to recommend repairs to the shingles and windows. Staff recommended vinyl shingles to cut down on ongoing maintenance costs.

The decision to replace the cedar shingles was made to stop water leakage that was damaging the interior of the lighthouse. Vinyl shingles were chosen as a way to keep ongoing maintenance costs low.

The siding and window replacement costs approximately \$46,700. Work began in May and will be finished this week. With money already invested in the project, council is hesitant to stop the project.

"We can't just stop here and restart," said councillor Ron Hewitt.

Deputy mayor Laura Haight said repairing the lighthouse could wait no longer. Wood was rotting inside the building and there was noticeable damage. Public works committee members were aware the new shingles would not be wood.

"I'm sort of pleased with what is (going) up there now," Haight said.

She said council should work with Heritage Kincardine to restore the building slowly. Working together will eliminate communication problems in the future.

Haight suggested setting up a meeting with all heritage groups in the municipality. The groups will discuss how to protect both private and municipally-owned buildings in the future, as well as what to do with the lighthouse.

"If we're going to do this," Haight said. "Let's slow down and do this right."

Mayor Larry Kraemer also suggested taking extra time to preserve the building. He recommended leaving the vinyl shingles on while fixing the interior of the building. When it is complete, the shingles could be re-evaluated.

Heritage Kincardine wants council to designate the lighthouse as a heritage building. The building's exterior can't be designated while it has vinyl siding. Council agreed to designate the interior of the building immediately. When the

vinyl siding is removed, the exterior can be considered for designation.

The exterior can be done after the siding is restored.

It was suggested the interior be designated now and the exterior designation could follow after the original siding is put back on.

Heritage Kincardine wants the building to be designated as a heritage structure immediately. The exterior of the tower cannot be designated with vinyl siding on it. The interior of the lighthouse will be designated as a heritage building

and the exterior can be included at a later date if the original siding is returned.

Several councillors apologized for putting up the vinyl siding.

"We had no intent to deface the lighthouse," said councillor Randy Roppel. "Isn't it nice to see politicians backtrack?"

Several parties involved with heritage in the municipality, including the pavilion and the Walker House, have agreed to join the proposed heritage partnership. Council sent the proposal to the CHAT committee for further study.