

Riverview not pursuing own inspection dept.

■ But town staff will examine pros and cons of planning commission conducting Riverview building inspections

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The Town of Riverview has no immediate plans to take responsibility for its own building inspections.

Currently, its building inspections are carried out by the Greater Moncton Planning District Commission which is also responsible for variance approvals, rezoning recommendations and other services for the tri-communities and surrounding areas.

However, there have been rumours of late that the town might follow in the footsteps of its neighbour Dieppe and hire its own building inspectors, taking the role from the hands of the commission. Last year, the then-Town of Dieppe (it became a city on Jan 1, 2003) announced it was setting up its own inspections department.

"I don't know where those rumours are coming from, unless someone is referring to our conversations back at budget time, said Riverview Mayor Bruce Fitch. "It is certainly not in our agenda at this time," he said.

But the town manager's department will carry out a study later this year into the pros and cons of maintaining the status quo regarding building inspections.

After Dieppe pulled out of the commission regarding building inspections, the mayor said Riverview town council was naturally concerned their municipality would be faced with increased charges by the GMPDC. "We thought we and the other communities served by the commission might have to make up the difference for the lost inspections revenue from Dieppe," he said.

Town manager David Muir said



Dave LeBlanc attaches fascia recently to a new home at the south end of Riverview. The Town of Riverview is studying the possibility of setting up its own building inspection department.

town council's concern was not unfounded because in the commission's budget submission to Riverview for 2003, there was a sizable increase on the building inspection side of it.

Fitch said town council agreed to deny the commission's request for additional funds and pay them the same amount as 2002. "They would have to work within those confines or we would have to also consider looking after our own building inspections."

Fitch said the commission made some adjustments, including staff layoffs, to cover off the Dieppe decision and "we never heard back from them." The cost of building inspections is a concern that is "always on our plate."

But any move by the town to take responsibility for it in the

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Immediate future is "much ado about nothing," said Fitch.

However, Muir said his department will be taking a thorough look at the whole building inspection question some time during the summer, to weigh the benefits of having the commission look after the inspections versus the town providing the service itself.

Chris Reddy, director of the Greater Moncton Planning District Commission, said the Town of Riverview made it clear at budget time it would not pay any increased costs for building inspections or they would get their own way. "And there has been no mention of it since," he said.

As the Dieppe experience shows, a community can withdraw from the commission's inspection services with very little notice, said Reddy. The commission really has to scramble to adjust its budget if this occurs, he added, noting they had to lay off staff shortly after Dieppe's announcement.

Certainly, if Riverview was to go its own way regarding inspections, it would increase the manpower and financial problems of the commission.

"We have to be very prudent on how we handle our resources," said Reddy. "Regardless of the need, it is extremely difficult for the commission to spend any money or hire more staff."

Quick facts

A look at the Greater Moncton Planning District Commission:

■ Although there is a general municipal plan in place for all the unincorporated areas represented by the commission in Westmorland and Albert Counties, each local service district (LSD) was recently given the authority by the province to also have its own municipal plan.

■ Commission director Chris Reddy said eight LSDs have indicated they will develop their own plan. He hopes to meet with them as soon as possible to make sure they get with the general municipal plan and we have "something that is effective for everyone."

■ "The commission's workload keeps increasing but it is not accompanied by an increase in revenue," says Reddy.

■ Communities can withdraw from the building inspections service of the planning commission, but provincial law does not allow any of them to withdraw from the commission itself.

■ Communities represented by the Greater Moncton Planning District Commission are Moncton, Riverview, Dieppe, Salisbury, Pettitcodiac, Alma, Riverside-Albert, Hillsborough and the unincorporated areas in southeastern New Brunswick.