

Budget changes keep mill rate at 2 per cent

As Councillors struggled to come up with an operating budget that was acceptable and defensible they rejected a number of deletions put forward by staff in order to bring the mill rate increase down to no more than a 2 per cent increase. Here are some of the changes.

Additions

- + \$20,000 for Transportation Study: At the suggestion of Ward 2 Councillor Kathy Gastle, councillors left \$20,000 in the Engineering and Public Works budget to help pay for a transportation study. Staff had recommended that \$35,000 initially included in the budget by the department head be deleted totally.

"We have a long list of transportation concerns that over and over and over again constituents from every ward have brought to Council. I can't speak strongly enough that we need to move forward and get some information so we can deal with the Norval by-pass, Tenth Line, 15 Sideroad and the 401-Steeles Avenue corridor," Gastle successfully argued.

- + \$6,000 for Fairly Lake weed harvesting: Staff recommended that money to cut the weeds in Fairly Lake be eliminated from the budget but Acton Councillor Rick Bonnette was successful in convincing them to restore it.

"The lake is in a deplorable condition because of the weeds and I think that from an esthetic and safety point of view \$6,000 is a small price to pay," Bonnette said.

- + \$2,000 for sidewalk snow clearing: Faced with a number of requests to clear more Town sidewalks of snow, councillors agreed to increase the proposed \$18,684 budget by \$2,000 to include clearing Guelph Street on both sides from Main Street to Delrex Boulevard, Mountainview Road from Guelph Street to Delrex on the west side and Delrex to Argyle Road on the east side.

Deletions

Preliminary budget estimates submitted by all departments totaled a \$1.2 million increase over last year, which would have meant a 12.34 mill rate increase. Heading into budget talks staff recommended \$1 million in cuts which would have reduced the mill rate increase to 2 per cent.

Staff also suggested cuts which could bring the increase down to 0 per cent, requiring further cuts of \$198,797. As of Monday night councillors had made cuts totalling \$112,091. They include:

- - \$31,425: Reduce overtime and part-time wage costs in the Building, Zoning and Enforcement Services area by transferring responsibility for Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning plans examinations to the building permit applicant.
- - \$3,655: Not hire a stu-

dent to fill in during vacations and to work on special projects in the Finance Department.

- - \$34,425: Transfer a parks employee to the arenas for the winter, thereby eliminating the need to hire a part-time facility operator. Two full-time arena employees

will be transferred to the Parks and Cemeteries section for the summer, eliminating the need to hire two seasonal employees.

- - \$22,394: Postpone a study of the Town's Recreation facilities.

- - \$15,000: Reduce the budget for legal fees.

Zero tax increase goal in budget talks

From Front Page

Bonnette, opened Monday's meeting by asking each councillor whether they were happy with a small mill rate increase or wished to continue cutting to get to zero.

Seven of those present - a majority - elected to continue cutting.

Pushing for a zero per cent tax increase, Ward 2 Councillor Kathy Gastle said that in challenging times councillors had the responsibility to be more efficient.

Councillor John Day, who submitted proposed cuts totaling \$131,737 that night, argued that aiming for a zero tax increase was not a psychological tactic, but a realistic goal.

Councillors Anne Currie, Al Cook, Ron Chatten, Rob Heaton and Mayor Marilyn

Serjeantson also want to make additional cuts to come in with no tax increase.

Acton Councillors Norm Elliott and Gerald Rennie along with Georgetown Councillors Keith Bottomley and Kevin Kuiack were content with the cuts already made which could have resulted in a 1.12 per cent tax increase.

Rennie said he'd spoken to several seniors who

Lawsuit dropped against trustee

From Front Page

Gardiner said. TCB members alleged that Gardiner, along with trustees Flo Belford, Joe Pavelka, Penny Siebert and Board Chair Linda Glover, violated the Municipal Conflict of Interest Act because they voted on the Board of Education

were't concerned with a small tax increase and didn't want to spend hours in political posturing looking for cuts that would add less than 2 cents a day to the average tax bill.

Noting that the Town had not had a tax increase in five years Councillor Norm Elliott said that Town councillors would be fooling themselves by cutting the budget any more.

budget while having family members employed by the Halton board.

TBC spokesman Frank Gue, who was in the Milton courtroom on Monday when the application against the trustees was dismissed. He said a provincial law clears up any concerns TCB had.

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