

McKenzie, Marks challenge budget procedure, priorities

Acton's 1972 budget did not sit well with at least two members of council, non-members of the budget committee and they voted against accepting it when the resolution was put to a vote.

Deputy-Reeve G. W. (Pat) McKenzie objected to the proposals because he had no chance to peruse copies of recreation and band budgets. He told council he could not vote intelligently on the budget until he knew what was in it and had a chance to study it.



PETER MARKS

PAT MCKENZIE

He based his objection on a statement made at the last regular meeting promising all budgets would be available for all councillors to peruse over the weekend. "When we didn't get them I got angry," McKenzie told the Free Press.

He and the mayor engaged in a verbal sparring match which saw the mayor bang his gavel down and sharply criticize the deputy reeve.

Councillor Peter Marks, meanwhile, called the proposed budget a maintenance budget, one that the people want to see but not necessarily what is good for the town.

Turning backs

"We had 12 1/2 mills looking at us," he noted, "and tried to get them down to four which meant they had to be cut. We are turning our backs on things which are needed."

Marks said the budget needs to be looked at more realistically referring to cuts in the recreation budget where the budget committee cut arena renovations recommended by the engineers to keep the arena safe. He felt cutting the development commission's budget was another mistake since the commission would need the money to promote sale of industrial land and by paring the budget he said council was actually turning away revenue from the sale of land.

"I don't honestly believe a maintenance budget will supply Acton's needs in 1972," Marks declared. He also felt there were so many variables in the budget council could be looking at a serious deficit in 1972.

In Marks' view the people of Acton had to face up to their responsibilities and accept increased taxes for a year. He also took issue with the centennial committee's budget of \$4,500 saying he would like to take a far more detailed look at plans before his seal of approval was attached.

Prodded by the reeve, Marks admitted he had reservations about last year's budget but had voted for it expressing reservations.

Sharp issue

Budget chairman Reeve Frank Oakes took sharp issue with Marks, claiming he wanted things both ways, saying things were left out with one breath and then predicting a deficit with another. In his view the people of Acton are getting good service from the municipality and he challenged Marks' statement that the town's size limited giving

good service.

"We are all afraid of 12 mills," Marks replied, "or we could have struck it." He felt if there were enough people to soak up the increase council's fears need not be warranted.

Mayor Les Duby agreed with Councillor Marks' view on the centennial project noting he was not overly impressed with the project which was based on the views of 50 people who attended a special meeting. Half of the people there, the mayor thought, were oriented towards recreation. "I feel we need more time and discussion on the project," the mayor said.

Councillor Chapman questioned how colleague Marks could call figures a "maintenance" budget since the town would still continue paying for improvements. Marks replied he used the word "maintenance" because several growth items were cut.

"We have to cut the cloth to fit the pattern," maintained the mayor, relating that there were many things he and other members of council would like to see done which could not be included in the budget. "We can't commit ourselves for the new council either," he said referring to this year's election.

Why no copies?

"It bothers me," said the deputy-reeve Pat McKenzie, "that I haven't got a copy of the recreation and band budgets to study? Why haven't we," he demanded. "How can I answer questions about the budget for taxpayers or vote intelligently on it when I've never seen one?"

The mayor replied that the budget committee was willing to change its mind about budgets if they were outvoted. He reviewed the procedure council used and felt most were satisfied with it.

"But there's a majority of council on the budget committee," retorted the deputy reeve. "I don't agree with that." "Write them down then," said the mayor.

"Come on — write it down... three pages of it," the deputy-reeve replied with sarcasm.

At this point the mayor cracked his gavel down sharply and thundered, "I object to your

attitude Mr. McKenzie." The deputy reeve repeated his remark.

"It is up to council if they want to change procedure," the mayor retorted.

Councillor Marks said it was time to investigate the total procedure of the budget committee. He commended the committee for the many hours they had spent laboring over the budget and asked if it wasn't time to look at different methods of appointment.

Councillor Masales wondered if the deputy reeve had done all his own homework. Earlier he questioned our budget, he said, and now it seems is not fully aware of his own.

The deputy reeve disagreed earlier with the \$7,100 the budget set aside for a "slush" fund to buy equipment. He said the budget committee was asking others to cut and then adding as they saw fit. The mayor explained that there was a concern by members of public works that town trucks might give out at any time and the money would be available in the event this came to pass.

Councillor Norm Elliott agreed it was ridiculous for two members of the committee to ask for \$7,000 as had been stated, and then ask the public works committee to cut \$9,200 from the budget. It was not discussed at committee he said and was impossible to cut now.

Head off crisis

Councillor Coats said the money was set aside to head off a crisis when funds are not available. The reeve said there was also a chance the administration committee could need it in the event office equipment broke down. It is available to either committee, he insisted.

"We've lived without one for four or five years," retorted the deputy.

The reeve noted that anyone can defeat parts of the budget with motions from the floor. Some have the attitude the budget can't change, he noted. Amendments can be made, he

assured council.

But Marks said this was impossible unless there was some verbal support from one member of the budget committee because the committee outnumbered the rest of council 5-4.

But you are on record as trying, the reeve emphasized. That is what democracy is all about.

Councillor Greer also advised his colleague Marks that in answer to renovations on the arena it was the opinion of the committee that they were not a necessity. If there is trouble there Greer said all the recreation committee had to do was come to council.

"The engineer told us three years ago there were rotten timbers there," said Marks, and it would cost more to repair it piece-meal. He noted the recreation committee had approved the budget by a majority and they had asked for funds three years ago, two years ago and again last year with meagre results.

Councillor Coats noted the budget committee had a long and pleasant meeting with representatives of Parks Board and told them there was no way their budget could go through — it must be cut. "Council said 'sorry' - there is only so much money this year."

We should caution all boards of our limited funds, said the mayor. Money will go where it serves all the people of the town best.

No way

Councillor Elliott, pondering the budget and listening to the discussion, observed that there was no way council could justify a large increase on the minute assessment increase during the year. He agreed the budget committee had to make some difficult decisions and there was no viable way to make evaluation but he suggested council should re-examine the way the budget was set.

"I would have liked to look at the recreation and parks board budget," he said.

The mayor defended the procedure noting it was customary for the budget committee to receive the budgets and suggest cuts.

It was normal procedure, Coats agreed, but pressure of time this year so the mill rate could be struck, reversed the procedure. Normally budgets came to committee first.

After some comment on the spread between the commercial and residential mill rates about which several councillors expressed concern, the mayor expressed his personal appreciation to the reeve and other members of the finance committee for their handling of the budget. He noted once again it was everyone's prerogative to question anything that goes on at council.

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Committee set up study annexation of Eden Mills

Plans to bring the entire police village of Eden Mills within the boundaries of Eramosa township and Wellington County were discussed at a joint meeting between representatives of Eramosa, Nassagaweya and the village Monday night.

The village is divided between Eramosa and Nassagaweya townships now with the larger portion in Eramosa.

A joint committee was set up Monday to work with village trustees and proceed with plans for the annexation. Each council will pick one representative to meet with the trustees and act as a liaison between the three bodies.

The proposed transfer is complicated by the fact that Nassagaweya is in Halton County and Eramosa in Wellington. School students on one side of the village attend schools in Guelph and Rockwood while on the other side they attend Acton schools and are bussed as far as Georgetown and Burlington.

Attend same schools

Under the proposed annexation all students would be able to attend the same schools in Wellington.

Trustees of the village told the meeting 85 per cent of the village is oriented towards Guelph. They felt the majority of the people would be in favor of the annexation. There is some opposition but trustees plan a house-to-house survey of the

Nassagaweya side to get the feelings of all residents.

Reeve Warren Parkinson, the council and the clerk of Eramosa, Reeve Ann MacArthur and her council and clerk from Nassagaweya and Dave Masson and secretary John Turner of the village were the principals at the meeting.

District dogs

to appear on TV

Mrs. D. Steel and her dogs, Cavalier King Charles Spaniels, are to be special guests on the Elaine Cole show, CKCO-TV Kitchener on Friday, June 9.

Mrs. Steel's kennels are located on 17 Sideroad W., south of Acton. The kennel is the only one in Canada for the Cavalier King Charles breed.

Lions sponsor CNIB drive

Acton Lions Club is again sponsoring the Canadian National Institute for the Blind canvass in Acton and they are asking for volunteers to assist with the drive.

An organization meeting is being held April 25 at 7:30 p.m. to plan the canvass. Volunteers are requested to get in touch with Vic Bristow prior to the date for further information.

ACTON LIONS CLUB

Spring Frolic and Dance

SATURDAY, MAY 6th

at ACTON COMMUNITY CENTRE

DANCING 9 P.M. to 1 A.M.

FEATURING Harry Hibbs and the Shrimp Cocktail

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NOTICE TO PARENTS

North Halton Sunshine School for Retarded Children

Mrs. G. Jeffares will be receiving applications

at the Sunshine School

April 28, from 9 A.M. to 5 P.M.

E. Bodnar, Chairman of the Board. J. W. Singleton, Director of Education