

Downtown or east? - Plan Board puzzle

Acton's downtown core is a puzzle for council. Now planning board wonders what should be done to stimulate business either there, or at the town's eastern end.

In an animated discussion Thursday, planning board members plunged into the topic when Councillor Bill Coats said perhaps it was time someone in town came up with a positive statement on the downtown core.

Someone in the past must have thought it was worthwhile keeping since it is designated C1 on the official plan, he told the board.

Without favoring anyone, someone should have the guts to say whether the town favors developing the downtown area or the eastern end of town, Coats said. Two merchants he knows refused

to make improvements to their businesses downtown because they don't know where the business core of the town is going to be situated, and no one in official circles is giving them any guidance.

"We can't force anyone to locate there (downtown)" replied board chairman Sid Saitz. "The trend today is to shopping plazas. Personally, I am in favor of the eastern end of town being developed but the initiative must come from private developers just as in the downtown."

Guessing game

It's a guessing game for merchants now, said Coats. Suppose we had not given permission for downtown businesses to expand. What would have happened?

"Let's tell the merchants what we

want. Let's say one thing or the other—develop to the east or encourage development of the downtown core."

"I agree with Councillor Coats," said his colleague Norm Elliott. "We have done very little planning. We have a problem in the downtown core. We face urban renewal in the area. Many stores have been closed, and a plan could give council some directions. But it is also true we cannot direct the location of business and personally I feel business thrives with competition, not protection."

"We can recommend but we have no power," retorted chairman Saitz. "We can plan but we can't force any one to locate where we want."

"We are strong or as weak as we want to make ourselves", answered Elliott. "If we don't plan ahead even the

three members of council can't go back to council with any planning board policy."

"The initiative must come from private developers," the chairman disagreed. "We have done the planning required. And now we are making plans for annexation."

Pressures

"We were still reacting to stimulus from other sources," insisted Elliott. "And now we are talking about annexation because of pressure from developers who want to be within the borders of Acton."

"Council asks direction from the planning board and won't do anything till they get it," declared Coats.

"Councillor Coats is right," declared Lou Bonnette, "but we can't plan the downtown core unless we have

the insight into the feelings of the merchants and come up with some well founded ideas. I recommend we have a special meeting with the merchants, listen to them and hear what they think. The downtown core has been the backbone of this town for years. I couldn't consider or vote on any planning until we hear from them."

Chairman Saitz said the subject had been studied so often and merchants had let people know how they felt about the downtown when interviewed by the Free Press. He reminded the board that there already was a conceptual plan of the town which the board had tried to use for guidelines.

"I'd like to get the whole feeling before any decisions are made," reiterated Bonnette.

"There are things we can do about

parking in town, too," suggested Coats. And Elliott agreed that perhaps the board should come forward with parking recommendations.

The mayor concluded it was a serious matter but noted many blinds were being closed on downtown stores without prior consultation with the board or council. He saw no way of looking into the future and predicting the town's needs.

Weather outlook:
Sunny

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MILL EMPLOYEES work to clean up the Thursday morning. Cement from the structure flattened a garage beneath the tower. (Photo by D. Pink)

Flour mill silo collapses

Workmen escaped possible injury Thursday morning as the wall of a silo at the Acton Flour Mills collapsed, littering the ground with large chunks of cement and spreading hundreds of bushels of grain across the mill yard.

Co-owner of the mill, Jim Eccles, helping employees load grain into trucks for temporary storage, said the silo was full — 5,500 bushels.

No one could offer a reason for the accident though former owner, D. H. Lindsay, did speculate on the possibility that blasting could have. Employee Gerry Rotsal was most shaken by the collapse.

"One minute", he told the Free Press, "just one minute before the collapse I was standing right there". He indicated a spot where a large chunk of cement lay covered with grain.

"Real men, eh" commented another, as he looked at the pile

of grain that stretched from the base of the silo into the creek. "I heard a loud bang and came running around here," he said as his eyes followed the golden path to the gaping hole with pieces of cement hanging by the steel rods that once reinforced the structure.

The walls of the silo were about six inches thick, solid cement.

Co-owners Jim Eccles and Fred Kee, who was not present at the accident, bought the mill earlier this summer from D. H. Lindsay.

Mr. Lindsay estimated 1,000 bushels were lost in the collapse.

Acton entry in Grey Cup parade?

Acton Centennial Commission is busy looking into the possibility of an Acton entry into the Grey Cup parade in Hamilton on December 2, advertising Acton's Centennial.

Commissioner Jack Carpenter is scratching his head for suggestions on how to raise the \$400 needed for a float in the parade and the possibility of

Acton bringing the town band which would be another \$300.

"It would give us nation-wide exposure on TV" Carpenter points out, "and give us a chance to show off our centennial flags with a large color party".

He's willing to listen to suggestions on how to raise the money, or accept donations which would enable Acton to have an entry.

Arena unsafe in high wind says engineer

A charge by professional engineer Alfred Chan that the Acton arena is structurally unsafe during periods of high winds and his estimate that it would cost in the neighborhood of \$20,000 to stabilize the building, almost knocked the wind out of members of Acton Parks and Recreation Committee Thursday night.

A member of the firm of Morrison, Herschfield, Miller and Huggins, which has handled preliminary engineering for the committee since the multi-phase arena reconstruction program began in 1970, Chan recently completed a structural study of the west wall. This led him to recommend that the committee consider reinforcing it against the wind, before installing new cladding.

Parks committee decided earlier, this summer to at least have the west wall, which abuts the community centre building, repaired after town council chopped their budget request for arena renovations from \$13,000 to \$5,000. Previous phases of the reconstruction program already completed included shoring up of the south wall in 1970 and reinforcing of the east wall at the back of the building last year.

Call meeting

It is expected representatives of the engineering firm will attend an emergency joint meeting of town council and parks committee this week to further explain the situation, which some members believe is serious enough to consider closing the arena down for part of the hockey season.

Chan said Thursday night that "because the building has been standing for 50 years doesn't mean it will always stand up." He said wind analysis was not included in his firm's original report on inadequacies in the building, because they were not asked to do a complete study of the building.

"We were assuming the building was structurally sound in the original report," Chan told the committee. The engineer's explanation failed to convince vice-chairman Councillor Orval Chapman who charged that the firm "goofed" in its study.

Engineering goof?

"They gave us a price to make the building safe. Now they come back and say you need \$16,000 more to make it safe," Chapman complained.

Committee member Diane Spielvogel agreed with Chapman and expressed surprise that wind analysis was not part of the building code, when the arena was first constructed.

"We should have at least known about this in 1970," chairman Hugh Patterson chimed in.

Councillor Peter Marks reminded his colleagues that in all honesty the firm had recommended that repairs to the entire building be done all at one time.

"But if we'd have done all they

recommended, we still wouldn't have had a safe building, according to what we've been told tonight," Chapman argued.

In spite of arguments about whether or not the committee was short changed in the engineering study, Chan didn't hesitate to emphasize that the building is unsafe.

"Hypothetically, not as an engineer for us, but just as an

engineer would you say the building is unsafe?" asked committee member Barry Incoe.

"I would say so," Chan replied.

"You would put this in writing, that the building is unsafe?" Chapman asked.

"Oh yes," the engineer replied.

Both walls

Chan recommended installation of a cross-bracing system on the west wall to protect against wind adding that the east wall, which was shored up last year, should also be reinforced against the wind.

"When you talk about the whole building resisting the wind, the

(Continued in Page Three)



CORP. BOB ARBOUR

New corporal

New Corporal for Acton detachment of the O.P.P. is Bob Arbour. He replaces the late Corp. Ray Mason.

Corp. Arbour began his duties here last Wednesday. He has

been with the O.P.P. 11 and a half years, and his promotion to corporal became effective August 14.

A native of Tecumseh, he went to high school in Windsor. For five years he operated an ambulance service in Chatham with his brother, who is still in the business. He then took O.P.P. training.

Most recently he has been living in Tillsonburg. After being with the Tillsonburg force for five and a half years, he was placed in charge of the two-man detachment at Port Burwell, 20 miles away. He continued to live in Tillsonburg until coming here. He also worked with the forces at London, Port Stanley and Fort Franks.

Corp. Arbour is single, plays golf and baseball. He enjoys travelling

\$2,539,792 permits

Building permits issued in Acton for the first seven months of 1972 total \$2,539,792, the Free Press learned this week. Major part of the permits were for two apartment buildings, town houses on Main St. S. and new homes built by Heritage Homes on Churchill Road S. and Bovis along Wallace St.

There were 46 permits issued

including \$91,000 for three industrial alterations and commercial changes of \$50,000. This included the new medical clinic on Queen St. and renovations to Highway Garage after the fire which gutted the interior during the winter.

Twelve swimming pool permits worth \$52,350 were also issued during the first period of 1972.

The latter part of 1972 could see another large building permit total with building continuing at Acton Meadows subdivision, and the houses on Main St. S. as well as more apartments.

The total value of permits in 1972 could well exceed any previous year in Acton's history by a large margin.



THE TOWN COUNCIL'S gas house gang had plenty of bench strength for Friday night's seven inning exhibition diamond duel with the Coffee House Freaks but youth won out. Left to right cheering their first batter (Mayor Duby) are Grant

Usher, Bill Coats, Hugh Patterson, Harold Townsley, John Dunn, Norm Elliott, Peter Marks, Orv Chapman, Pat McKenzie, Frank Oakes and Bat Girl. Turn inside for the story and more pictures.

(H. Coles Photo)