

Fire chief irate at 'careless fires'

Rockwood fire chief Carl Meadows is fed up with some people's "stupidity" at this time of year when it comes to fires.

Mr. Meadows and his deputy chief Frank Allsop attended the Eramosa township council meeting Monday evening, irate after a busy weekend of nine grass fires. The chief claims most of these fires were due to carelessness and stupidity and could have been avoided.

Of the 26 fires so far this year, Mr. Meadows stated, 13 were grass fires. He told the council one of this weekend's grass fires was caused by a person burning garbage in an incinerator which saw a runaway ash set a field on fire. He said this kind of fire is excusable, as it was purely accidental and he knows the person will not do it again. However, he compared it to a person burning off a field on a dry and windy day, or a person burning something in the middle of a field. This kind of deliberate behaviour is not excusable.

Mr. Meadows said the public should be more educated as to the fire by-law in the township. He pointed out the township has spent \$1,255 in wages and another \$1,805 in the use of the truck in the past three weeks, most of which have been "inexcusable grass fires."

It was not only the cost which concerned the fire chief. He explained that while the fire trucks are out fighting an avoidable grass fire, a home, school or other institution could start on fire. He said he did not think the average person was getting a fair shake.

Taxpayers money Mr. Meadows said he resented the fact that the average taxpayer had to pay for someone else's carelessness when it came to grass fires. He had considered fining some of the offenders, who were definitely going against the by-law, but decided against it for now. Mr. Meadows explained that if he fined a few people, he would be afraid that when people really needed the fire department's assistance, they would hesitate to call for fear of getting a fine. "Instead of having a five acre fire, you have a 25 acres fire," he told council.

He also stated that the biggest problem is proving the person was careless. The

chief explained that a person could have a field on fire, and claim it was started by a passerby who threw a cigarette out his car window. Mr. Meadows told the council of the weekend the fire department had this week. He told the council there was one fire after another, and they would pass one on the way to another. At one time, he said, there were two trucks out of Rockwood, and four trucks at the Hillsburgh fire department assisted the Rockwood department at one fire which had spread from grass into hardwood. Mr. Meadows said the owner came very close to losing 40 acres of hardwood. While fighting the fire, four fire trucks got stuck in the soft ground, making it very difficult to get the trucks to the fire. He said they had to be pulled out of the mud by tractors.

He said most of the weekend fires were caused by owners burning something in their fields. "It is ridiculous to light fires like that at this time of the year," Mr. Meadows retorted.

The fire chief asked council's permission to write letters to the people who have had grass fires recently and outline just how much it cost to fight one fire. Mr. Meadows claimed that each year it is some of the same people who have the fires, and they must be made aware of the penalties of not adhering to the fire by-law.

Council agreed that the public in general must become aware of the costs of fires to the taxpayers and of the fire by-law.

Fire by-law The by-law states that: no person shall set any fire at any time upon any road, street, or road allowance, within Eramosa township, except with the written permission of and supervision by the road superintendent; no person shall, anywhere within the township, during the months of March to November, inclusive of each year, set a fire in the open air without first obtaining from the clerk or a fire warden for the township, a permit to do

so; every applicant for a permit to set a fire in the open air shall submit a written application to the township clerk or a fire warden specifying the location at which it is proposed to set such fire, the purpose of the fire, and the precautions taken or intended to be taken in setting such fire.

The township clerk or a fire warden, upon issuing such permit, shall specify thereon the location at which such fire may be set and the precautions to be taken in so doing including the number of persons required to control such fire; no person shall set any fire in the open air pursuant to such permit without strictly complying with the terms of such permit as to the location of such fire, the precautions to be taken in connection therewith and the number of persons to be in attendance to control such fire; notwithstanding the issue of such permit, no person shall, during the months of March to November inclusive of each year, set a fire in the open air without first providing protection by earth works or other non-combustible material to prevent such fire from spreading.

Every fire set within the township pursuant to the provisions hereof shall be so controlled that dense or opaque smoke shall not issue therefrom for a longer period than ten minutes; the provisions hereof shall not apply to any fire set in masonry or metal fireplaces constructed as and used for an outdoor fireplace, barbecue, or incinerator, excepting that any persons setting such a fire shall so control it that dense or opaque smoke shall not issue therefrom for a longer period than five minutes; the following are hereby appointed fire wards for the township of Eramosa; the fire chief, the deputy fire chief and the captain of the Rockwood Volunteer Department; any person convicted of a breach of any provision of this by-law shall forfeit and pay a penalty not exceeding \$300 exclusive of costs and not less than \$25 for each offence.

The above by-law has been



ART WHEELS van is parked at Rockwood Centennial Public School this week. Work by local artist Ken Danby is on display for the students. The display illustrates the development of silk screening. Different colors are added until the final result (above) is obtained. Ontario Art Council, University of Guelph and Wellington County Board of Education supply the van.

Bridge limit concerns councillors

Eramosa councillor John McLeod would like to know what weight limit is on the bridges in Eden Mills.

At Monday evening's meeting of the council, Mr. McLeod said he was con-

cerned about the limit because it is not posted. He said if one bridge collapsed, access in and out of the village in one direction would be cut off. He said he was particularly concerned because of all the heavy traffic going through the village.

None of the councillors nor the roads superintendent Bob Hamilton could recall the bridges ever being posted, and decided to look into this right away.

Fender bender

Bert Post, of Guelph, didn't have to wait long for his first accident. He had only been driving for three days when the collision occurred.

He and Jamie Norton, R.R. 1, Acton, were involved in a fender bender on Churchill Rd., April 17.

in existence since August 1, 1968.

Mr. Meadows hopes the people responsible for the careless fires, will be more careful in the future before a tragedy results from an unnecessary grass fire.

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"Deliberately break law" council threatens action

Green time
The grass suddenly turned green this week, with crocuses, daffodils and dandelions suddenly in profusion.

Eramosa township council is a little more than annoyed at an Eramosa couple who council feels have deliberately set out to break a by-law.

The couple, of R. R. 1, Acton, appeared before council at their Monday evening meeting asking for a building permit to enclose their porch. The man explained that he was doing the work in December when a man, claiming to be the building inspector, told them a permit was required. The building inspector, Glen Creba denied he had visited the place at that time and could not figure out who it was.

Mr. Creba told council he had a lot of evidence to prove that a storage building was converted into a home by this couple, which was in direct conflict with the by-law stating that in an Agricultural zone, only one dwelling per parcel is permitted.

The new councillors listened as the veterans explained that two years ago, the couple attended a council meeting requesting a building permit for a store and a house. This was turned down. A while later, the same couple applied for a building permit for a large utility building, and presented plans of the proposed structure. Council passed this permit.

The building inspector said the same people approached him in the summer, asking for a permit to enlarge the existing building, but he could not give it to them.

Councillor Dave Masson was enraged with the couple. "After not getting a permit for a residence and still live in the building you constructed, you can come here and ask for another permit?" Mr. Masson suggested

handing the whole "mess" over to the township solicitor and having him deal with the couple directly. He was supported by councillor Alan Burnett. Mr. Masson felt the couple had deliberately set out to break the by-law. He said this was not the first time the couple had broken the law.

Upon council's request, the wife presented the original building permit and the plans of the utility building. Mr. Masson read to the other councillors that the plans stated there would be a pump house and a wood frame storage building trimmed with steel with a shanty roof, bathroom and utility room, electric heating, etc.

Mr. Creba charged the couple with knowing they were going to live in the building all along.

After the couple left, the council further discussed the matter. "I would like to throw the book at them" Mr. Masson exclaimed.

Reeve Bill Adsett was also annoyed with the couple. "Frankly, it is a flagrant misuse of the by-law," he stated.

Mr. Creba made plans to inspect the property before any formal action is taken, but in the meantime, he said, he would go over the by-law with the township lawyers.

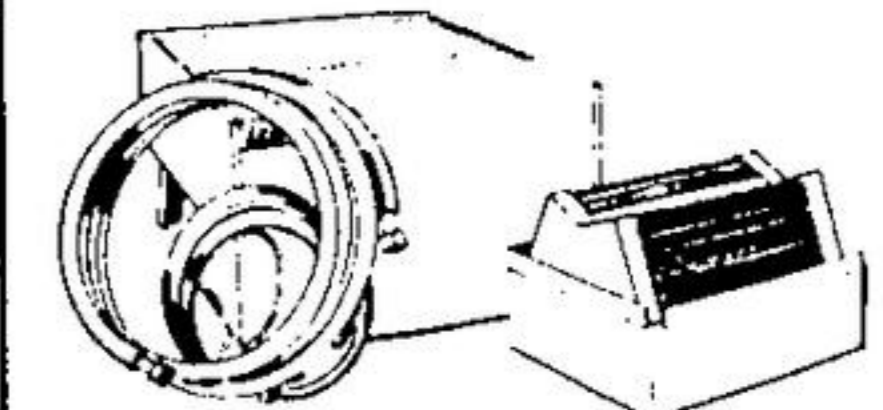
Thieves take lots of suds

Thieves made off with 10 cases of Molson Export Ale, which was taken from Acton Curling Club, on Churchill Road North. Entry was gained through a small window at the front of the building. Each case was a 24.

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