

Declare Halton Hills nuclear weapons free zone—HAND

Halton Hills council may be asked to declare the Town a nuclear weapons free zone.

Eldon Comfort of the Halton Hills Action for Nuclear Disarmament (HAND) group attended Friday's Acton council drop-in and bounced the idea of declaring the Town a nuclear free zone off new Mayor Russ Miller and councillors Ross Knechtel, Dave Whiting and Rick Bonnette.

The proposal didn't receive a very enthusiastic response from these Town fathers.

Comfort said the idea had been raised at the last HAND meeting and he was asked to go to drop-in to feel out the councillors. The group hasn't definitely decided yet to ask council to declare Halton Hills a nuclear free zone, however he seemed encouraged that councillors would at least examine the proposal if a letter is sent by HAND. He said the group will do some more homework before proceeding with the request.

Comfort explained if Halton Hills was a nuclear weapons free zone it would mean there should be no manufacturing, distribution or deployment of nuclear weapons or components within Halton Hills boundaries.

Knechtel thought it would make more sense and do more good if Halton Hills council passed a resolution encouraging Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau to continue

with his peace initiative.

Comfort agreed this would be a positive step, noting he has written just such a message to the PM and asked if Knechtel had. The councillor replied yes.

However, Comfort thought a message to the prime minister shouldn't be a substitute municipal step, it should be in addition to declaring the Town a nuclear weapons free zone.

Two NATO members, Holland and Denmark, have declared their nations nuclear weapons free zones and some towns in Canada have also taken this step, Comfort noted. It was pointed out Milton passed such a resolution.

Miller said he supported the holding of a referendum on the nuclear arms disarmament question in conjunction with the last municipal election, but this was another matter.

The mayor was concerned about the possibility local firms might be involved in the nuclear weapons industry and such a Town action could cost jobs. Miller was also worried about turning away firms interested in locating here just because they make parts for nuclear weapons or missiles. Unemployment is a severe problem in Halton Hills, he observed, and nothing should be done which might cost jobs now or in the future.

Comfort countered that in terms of employment, society would be better off with no armaments industry, nuclear or conventional. He explained the armaments industry is capital intensive and technological, so the amount of money needed to create one job in armaments would pay for three jobs in other fields, such as teaching or social services.

Knechtel took issue with Comfort's comments, noting the HAND official wasn't taking into account supply and demand. Miller pointed out conversion of armaments industries to social services would just cost more tax dollars.

He could understand the need to prevent nuclear war, Miller said, noting he has four grandchildren. At the same time he didn't want the peace movement to weaken the west to the point where the Russians blow us off the face of the earth.

While nobody wants nuclear war, Knechtel said, the bylaw HAND was suggesting was unenforceable, the Town couldn't know which local firms might be making parts for nuclear weapons.

By passing a bylaw making Halton Hills a nuclear weapons free zone all council would be doing was making themselves feel good, look good and be patting ourselves on the back," Knechtel said.

He explained the Town only has the

powers the province gives it, and Queen's Park has never said municipalities can have anything to do with controlling nuclear weapons. The Town would have no power to prosecute under the bylaw.

Comfort countered they heard the same argument from council for a time when they asked for the referendum on nuclear disarmament, that the province wouldn't allow it. However, that was a red herring which was eventually dismissed. The Constitution doesn't say municipalities can't be involved in the nuclear weapons issue.

Knechtel said he couldn't support passing a bylaw just to make himself "feel good" and such a bylaw would have "no teeth in it."

Passing the bylaw would give the council and citizens another chance to speak out on the issue and there aren't that many chances, Comfort stated.

Whiting asked if there was a standard wording for a nuclear weapons free zone bylaw municipalities were passing and Comfort replied HAND would do further research and find out. Whiting predicted when and if HAND sends a letter to council requesting the bylaw, it will be referred to the legal department.

Rather than ban nuclear weapons, nations should get rid of conventional weapons,

Whiting said. If there were only nuclear weapons there'd be no wars since politicians would die in a nuclear war the same as everyone else. He added he isn't concerned about Russians and the Americans having nuclear weapons, he worries about weapons being in the hands of unstable third world nations.

Nuclear weapons are a tremendous cost and there are already enough to destroy the world numerous times, Comfort said.

HAND should be taking their concerns to their MPs and MPPs who work at the government levels where something can be done, Knechtel said. If council passed the bylaw they'd just be "playing games and kidding ourselves" since it would be meaningless. Bonnette said he agreed completely with Knechtel.

Comfort said hopefully the referendum movement started in 140 Canadian municipalities last year will eventually lead to a national and later global referendum. In Halton Hills 84 per cent of voters cast yes ballots, the average across Canada where the referendum was held was 76 per cent voting yes. Another 40 Canadian municipalities are holding referendums now, he added. Nowhere in Canada has the yes vote been below 70 per cent.

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One Hundred and Ninth Year — Issue 24

ACTON, ONTARIO, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 21, 1983

44 Pages — Thirty Cents

Town hall funding, Stone School purchase may be in jeopardy — councillors plead no dollars



Rehearsing for the Christmas candlelight service at historic Limestone Presbyterian Church are choirsters Michael Denny, R.R. 4, 22 Sidroad and the Sixth Line. Photo by TED BROWN

Judging by comments made by a number of councillors Monday night not only will the Town not be putting any money into town hall restoration, but despite making an offer for the Stone School chances aren't good the municipality will buy it. Councillors are pledging no money in 1984.

Heritage Acton asked council to consider giving it the \$24,000 remaining in the old town hall demolition-restoration reserve fund.

While the request will be considered by the budget committee, council gave a clear signal that chances are slim the group restoring the hall will receive the money because the \$24,000 was removed from the reserve fund and placed in the Town's general account so it can be spent on anything, anywhere, in Halton Hills.

Noting there will be little in the way of a surplus in Town coffers at the end of 1983, a rarity for Halton Hills, Councillor Harry Levy advised nobody "hold their breath" waiting for municipal funds for the town hall or the Stone School. He predicted money previously earmarked for both projects will wind up in the general account next year.

A number of councillors noted the old town hall reserve fund was to be spent on the Stone School purchase.

Councillor Mike Armstrong said he will consider funding for the Stone School purchase or the town hall, not both, and urged his fellow councillors to think the same way at budget time.

Levy noted 99 per cent of all items referred to budget committee, which is what was done with Heritage Acton's request and the Stone School, don't get through the budget process at the committee stage anyway. Council will be "scratching for dough."

next year for general funds, Armstrong said, adding it was necessary to first put the town hall restoration reserve fund back in the general account and then consider both the Heritage Acton funding request and the Stone School purchase when the budget is examined.

If the town hall funds went to budget committee Councillor Finn Pouletrop wanted to make sure when the budget comes to council passing the budget wouldn't automatically mean Heritage Acton gets the money. He was told there'd be no problem with councillors debating individual items in the proposed budget.

Armstrong said if later Ted Tyler and Heritage Acton spelled out exactly what the money it wanted would be spent on he "might consider" giving them the \$24,000.

Despite being read by Clerk-Administrator Ken Richardson a 1979 motion making the \$40,000 originally set aside for demolition into a town hall restoration fund, several councillors still maintained it was only a demolition fund.

Councillor Pam Sheldon pushed for the Heritage Acton funding request to be settled that night once and for all. She also said the Stone School purchase and town hall funding should be viewed separately.

However, Councillor Ross Knechtel said much more time should be spent considering all angles and aspects of the town hall project than council was prepared to do Monday night. He warned the budget process may not go smoothly this year, there could be a lot of questions raised and considerable debate, especially if controversial items are included in the budget. "This deserves intensive scrutiny."

Stevens' land purchase - municipal complex issue

Citizens' presentation is delayed until January 9

A detailed presentation to town council from the Halton Hills-wide citizens' committee probing the Stevens' land purchase and municipal complex issue was postponed from Monday night to January 9.

Dave Page, a Georgetown lawyer and member of the citizens' group's research committee, told councillors Monday that new Mayor Russ Miller and some other councillors had asked that the presentation be delayed since Monday night's agenda was already heavy enough and it was the evening when Miller, Jake Kuiken and Peter Norton would be sworn in to their new posts

following appointment last week. The meeting was also adjourned for about 30 minutes while a short reception was held following the swearing in ceremonies.

Page said the citizens' group will make its presentation January 9 and he asked councillors to show some "indulgence" and allow them to speak longer than delegations are normally allowed.

Councillor Marilyn Serjeantson said she was disappointed the citizens weren't making their presentation Monday night, she'd been "looking forward to getting it over and done with."



It's official, it's Miller time. Russ Miller, the dean of local councillors, was sworn in Monday night as Halton Hills' third mayor. Here former mayor and new regional chairman Peter Pomeroy places the chain of office around Miller's neck.

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Inside today's Free Press

Outdoors with Lorne Fletcher is on page C1.

Halton MP Otto Jelinek isn't that impressed with the Liberal's Throne Speech. Turn to page C1.

Halton Hills has disabled parking permits. More on page 1.

Pastor John Cooper and his wife Bea are leaving Acton. Story and photo on page 1.

Walk-don't walk signals could be going up at the Main-McEl intersection next year. Turn to page 2.

Mabel Burkman has a special holiday season treat recipe. See her column on page 1.

The B section of today's paper contains a number of interesting stories about this special season and its traditions.

The Acton Figure Skating Club held its annual club competition Thursday night. Story on page 11 and photos on pages 12 and 14.