

Acton business group delayed

Personal conflicts and a general concern that the work of the Acton Chamber of Commerce might be duplicated prevented the formation of an Acton Business Association at a meeting last week.

The approximately 25 merchants who attended the meeting, chaired by Mill Street businessmen Ed Wood and Alma Swetman, decided to postpone a vote on the formation of an association until a list of objectives is prepared.

At a second, as yet unscheduled meeting, a five-member committee will outline a program for the proposed organization and could make a recommendation as to the extent to which it would be affiliated with the Chamber of Commerce.

Despite Mr. Wood's in-

sistence that the business association "is in no way meant to take the place of, or compete with, the chamber", the bulk of the meeting involved discussions in which the need for the organization was questioned.

While acknowledging the existence of the Chamber's retail business committee and the recently formed board of management for the improvement of the downtown core, Mr. Wood and fellow merchant John Coniglio expressed dissatisfaction with the Chamber's efforts on behalf of the businessmen.

Mrs. Swetman added that several merchants feel the retail committee has not held enough meetings to accommodate the needs of the downtown core.

Of the 100 questionnaires

circulated among the downtown merchants two weeks ago, Mrs. Swetman reported, 38 were returned, of which only two opposed the formation of a business association. Of the 38, she said, 15 stated their simultaneous support for an association and opposition to the Chamber's committee.

Mr. Coniglio shared the sentiments of several of the respondents who hoped the association would promote communication among the merchants so that they could assist one another with their individual problems.

Merchant Paul Neilsen, who serves on the board of management for Acton's new Business Improvement Area (BIA), defended the Chamber against charges that it has done little or nothing for the downtown core. Listing the

Chamber's activities on the merchant's behalf during the past two years, he contended that the Chamber's retail committee can provide the merchants with anything they need, including inter-communication.

Mr. Wood, himself a Chamber director, reiterated his assurance that the association would not impede the Chamber's efforts to improve and promote the downtown area.

It's a small-scale association that can work hand-in-hand with the Chamber, but just be something for the small businessmen," he explained.

Chamber secretary Betty Eastwood responded to Mr. Wood's suggestion that an association could provide Acton with a consumer relations service by pointing

out that the Chamber has had to "discreetly" handle many complaints from shoppers over the years.

Merchant Mike Kinal said the Chamber has done "a fantastic job" in laying plans for the improvement of the downtown core and urged that the association, if formed, be directly affiliated. For the association to have a say at town council meetings, he added, it would have to pay \$600 to become "certified".

Mrs. Eastwood extended the Chamber's invitation to all disgruntled businessmen to approach the Chamber with any grievances concerning alleged failure to meet the merchant's needs. Such a reconciliation, she felt, would negate the need for a separate business association, which, if formed, could seriously weaken the

Chamber. The enthusiasm shown by those at the meeting, Mrs. Eastwood said, would better benefit all concerned if channelled instead into the Chamber.

Already angered by Mr. Neilsen's comment, J. Gence of the Chambers role in improving the downtown core, Mr. Coniglio became apprehensive that the business association would fall under the Chamber's auspices and left the meeting. His departure led several in attendance to speculate that "petty politics" among the merchants presents a major obstacle to the formation and efforts of any organization.

"The small businessmen, Mr. Neilsen contended, is the most individualistic person. There will always be arguments."



HOBBIES EXPLAINED

Bob Anderson (top) a commercial artist, demonstrates the fine art of silk-screening at the North Halton District Cub's Resources Conference. Murray (Chopper) Harrison, district commissioner (below) shows Cubs his coin collection and answers questions about his numismatic hobby.



ARC open house April 21

An open house at the Adult Rehabilitation Centre will be held April 21 from 2 p.m. until 9 p.m. Mentally retarded adults will work the full day, displaying their work to the public. It is a tradition each year to celebrate their anniversary with a large cake. This year marks their eleventh anniversary. The ladies auxiliaries from Georgetown, Acton and Milton will help in preparing and serving tea.

Volunteers needed

Before Mother's Day auxiliaries will be canvassing for the "Flowers for Hope" Campaign. More canvassers are needed. Seeds are sold door to door. Anyone interested should contact the North Halton Association for the Mentally Retarded.

Opponents call hearings 'a farce' Hydro needs unjustified: lawyers

Landowners opposed to Ontario Hydro's plans to expropriate their properties for the Bradley-to-Limehouse transmission corridor decided at hearings Friday to abandon their original strategy of presenting specific evidence in favor of a general criticism of Hydro for its failure to justify the need for the corridor.

The residents called the expropriation hearings, which concluded after three days at the Acton Legion Hall, a "farce" and a "travesty" designed solely for chairman Donald Meyrick to "rubber-stamp" Hydro's preordained proposals.

Three lawyers representing landowners with individual concerns regarding the line's crossing of their properties kept presentations to a minimum so that the larger issue of the need for the line and for the Bradley-to-Limehouse route could be debated.

Each of the lawyers in turn criticized Hydro for restricting its evidence to what was described as "procedural" rather than substantiating arguments. Hydro lawyer Thomas Marshall presented only one witness during the hearings, a project engineer who testified simply to the specific delineation of the corridor from property to property.

Dick Howitt, lawyer for the majority of affected landowners in Erin, East Luther and East Garafraxa Townships, blamed Hydro's failure to justify the corridor for the public's resentment of the provincial government, a problem which he said recalled the days prior to the introduction of the Expropriations Act to protect citizens rights.

"Mr. Marshall leap-frogs the whole first issue as to whether the land should be taken at all," he said. "If you (Mr. Meyrick) accept Hydro's narrow interpretation of this hearing, you'll let the people down. These people came here thinking they were finally going to get the hearing they've been waiting for that they were finally going to learn why Hydro is taking their land."

Upon realizing that the opposition lawyers were concerned that any presentation of evidence on their part might jeopardize their success in proving the entire line to be unnecessary, Mr. Meyrick assured them he would not be dissuaded.

"I'm quite prepared to hear any evidence concerning modifications at the sites without prejudicing myself to your objections about the overall locale," he said.

Lawyer, Leon Parsian explained that he and his colleagues feared Mr. Marshall would attempt to "fill the great, gaping holes in his case" by cross-examining the opposition's witnesses.

Lawyer Gordon Chapman agreed that, although evidence he had on hand could save Hydro much expense and appease his clients, Hydro's failure to provide adequate evidence for its own case left the public without a genuine hearing.

"This isn't a hearing," he said. "All we hope is that the proper pressures will force Hydro to give us a proper hearing."

Lawyer Alan Blott pointed out that Mr. Meyrick had minimal evidence on which to base his decision, compared to the large volume of expert testimony presented at both the expropriation hearings for the northern section of the line and the 1974 Solandt Commission hearings on the Nanticoke-to-Pickering corridor.

Explaining that 14 expert witnesses were called at the Solandt hearings by Hydro to describe the extensive research which preceded the inquiry, he asked why the ongoing hearings could not be afforded the same right and courtesy.

Mr. Blott further stated that Mr. Meyrick was expected to rely solely on the recommendations of the Environmental Hearing Board (EHB), a body designed, he said, to hold public meetings regarding waste management.

Mr. Meyrick borrowed from a colleague's assessment to describe his task as arbitrator as being complicated by his equal regard for both opposing sides.

In his own summation, Mr. Marshall contended that the need for, and the location of, the corridor was not the issue facing the hearing.

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