

Neighbourhood Watch

New program is planned to fight vandalism

By LORI TAYLOR
Herald staff writer

The Halton Regional Police Force is hoping to launch a project called Neighbourhood Watch this summer in an effort to combat vandalism in Halton Hills and Milton.

Neighbourhood Watch would be a summer job program for students, whose wages would be paid by the Ministry of the Solicitor-General of Canada, along with a small amount of the program's operating costs. The force would be responsible for transportation costs, equipment, office space and equip-

ment, and any other expenses associated with the project.

"In the northern portion of the Regional Municipality of Halton, in the town of Milton and Halton Hills, we are experiencing a considerable amount of vandalism," Chief Ken Skerrett wrote in a report outlining the proposed project.

"The vandalism is most serious around the schools and in various small areas in the two towns. Last year (1978), we had 922 reported cases of willful damage."

TACKLING PROBLEM
"Vandalism, of course, is a

problem in the rest of the region, but tackling the problem on an experimental basis would appear to have the better chance of succeeding if we concentrate our efforts in these areas of relatively small communities."

The goals of the Neighbourhood Watch program would be to increase the community's awareness of the cost of the problem and its responsibility to assist in controlling it; to alert people in high-risk areas to the problem and ask for their assistance in reporting vandalism or suspicious people; and identify potential

vandals and in co-operation with other groups, divert them to "more appropriate behaviour," Chief Skerrett wrote.

The program would try to accomplish its aims with a number of techniques. Since the program will be running from late May to early September, and the schools will still be operating part of the time, during the course of the program, the students involved in the program will spend some time visiting the schools to enlist the support and co-operation of the students in the higher grades, with an eye to

preventing vandalism. **HIGH-RISK AREAS**
Residents in high-risk areas would be approached by the project workers with information packages. They would be encouraged to act as observers for the community. Decals with the police phone number would be supplied to homeowners to be attached to their telephone. Hopefully, this would encourage the homeowners to report acts of vandalism or any suspicious people they see, the chief said.
Young people with no place to go would receive assistance in finding "appropriate places

to 'hang out,'" the chief said. Support for the project would probably come from the independent insurance agents of Halton Hills, and some of the service clubs in the area, Chief Skerrett said. The project will require a project leader and six students, two each in Milton, Acton and Georgetown.

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HAPPY NINTIETH

Mrs. Stella Ellis of 83 Norton Crescent celebrated her 90th birthday Sunday with help from some of her neighbors. Mrs. Ellis was born in Brant County in 1889, and her father was the MPP in Brant County for almost twenty years. She has lived in Georgetown for about 14 years. An avid hockey fan, Mrs. Ellis never misses a game on television.

(Herald photo)

Acton's BIA prepares for OMB fight

By JOHN BOTTOMLEY
Herald special

Acton architect Lloyd Sankey cautioned Acton Business Improvement Area (BIA) members Wednesday that "Big Bad Wolf" Jerry Sprackman of Landawn Developments and his proposal for a Zehrs plaza are not gone, and called on the BIA to act quickly if he wants to keep the plaza out.

"The clock is ticking," said Mr. Sankey. Mr. Sprackman is going to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) with his case, and according to Mr. Sankey, this is where demands made at a Feb. 14 public meeting would carry a lot of weight.

"Many people feel they've been had," after their support for the plaza was apparently ignored by Halton Hills planning board, which rejected the plaza by an 8-0 margin.

FOOD STORE NEED
Mr. Sankey said the issues brought out at the meeting were: the need for a food store, more shopping variety, and most of all, parking.

"Landawn (the developers for the proposed plaza) can answer these needs outside the town. That's easy. We've got to answer them downtown."

Region's budgets are up

Departmental budgets reflecting 12 to 18 per cent increases over 1978 are being submitted to Halton regional council for preliminary review, prompting regional chairman Jack Raftis to warn that reductions had better be made if Halton taxpayers are to avoid a substantial tax increase this year.

Although chief administrative officer Ernie Reid has said some departments have submitted decreased budgets that will offset corresponding increases elsewhere, Mr. Raftis expressed displeasure over the situation at last week's administration committee meeting.

"If we continue the way we've been going, we'll be in big trouble," he said. "We're going to have to consider further reductions."

INCREASE GRANTS
Although the chairman cited no individual committee or department, his comments followed the decision by the administration committee to increase grants to four area organizations by 18 per cent. The Royal Botanical Gardens, the Niagara Mid-Western Ontario Travel Association and the Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra received increased 1979 grants totalling \$41,800.

Several departmental budgets are still to be finalized at the committee level before the administration committee considers them collectively April 11.

"Acton can still avoid the problems Milton and Georgetown face," said Mr. Sankey. He contended that strip development in the two neighbouring towns had killed their downtowns.

Mr. Sankey defined two areas where he felt the downtown could accommodate a large supermarket, including parking.

The first is the corner of Mill and Main Streets where the drugstore, IGA and Dominion Hotel are now located. Mr. Sankey suggested an easier site would be at the other end of the downtown, where there is now a Foodland, a Canadian Tire outlet and a street which could easily be closed.

TWO WEEKS
Foodland is said to be currently negotiating with A-B Supermarket about a possible amalgamation of the two stores, although neither one is saying anything.

BIA chairman Paul Nielsen told Halton Hills planning board two weeks ago two stores were considering amalgamation but would not identify them. He did say the move could force the closure of a street.

Don Lindsay, owner of A-B Supermarket told the BIA Wednesday there would be a big development soon in the downtown but would not say what the development was.

Work which the BIA has done already in the downtown has amounted to cosmetics, according to Mr. Sankey. He said the time has come for actual surgery.

"The town must create a plan for revitalization, and the plan should not create another study, screaming of motherhood and apple pie until it is laid to rest on a shelf," said Mr. Sankey.

The Acton architect said immediately action and commitment from the merchants is needed. He suggested parking space could be created behind present store, with connections to the main street.

LOW COST LOANS
The province, said Mr. Sankey, has a program open to towns with a population under 30,000 which can provide up to \$150,000 in low cost loans for downtown revitalization.

"You must be open, positive and optimistic, convinced you will make the downtown work. The future of the downtown is in your hands. Treat it well and it will serve for many, many years to come."

Mr. Sankey has worked in downtown revitalization in Collingwood where he put a 25,000 square foot Loblaw's in the downtown core. He is now working for Ottawa as a planner for its improvement downtown.

BIA board chairman Henry Strachyria started off the business meeting with a series of witty attacks on Mr. Sprackman's proposal. "Mr. Sprackman told the BIA his plaza would provide 50 jobs. When it was turned down, he scaled it down and told us it would supply 90 jobs. If he keeps it up we will have full employment."

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