

Cost of recreation master plan has increased

By PAUL DORSEY
 Herald staff writer
 Despite strenuous opposition, by Coun. Roy Booth and other members, town council has tacked an extra \$5,000 onto the \$43,300 cost of the Halton Hills Master Parks and Recreation Plan, scheduled for release next month.

Council voted 7-5 last Tuesday night to invest more municipal funds into consultant's fees after recreation director

Glen Gray suggested that the \$5,000 is "a small price to pay" to guarantee the plan's effectiveness.

Those voting in favor of a recommendation by council's special committee on the Parks Plan were Mayor Pete Pomeroy and councillors Marilyn Serjeantson, Ross Knechtel, John McDonald, George Malby, Harry Levv and special committee chairman Ed Wood.

Those opposed to the additional expenditure were councillors Booth, Mike Armstrong, Walter Biehn, Russ Miller and Pat Patterson.

Coun. Wood's committee was formed last month to plan the town's approach to the comprehensive guide for the development of parks and recreational facilities.

NEW PARKS
 Two years in the making, the

400-page Parks Plan was prepared by the consulting firm of Balmer, Crapo and Associates, and suggests extensive additions and upgrading projects to meet the public's recreational needs during the next two decades.

Coun. Wood told council last week that another \$5,000 should enable his committee to summon consultants whenever their expertise is needed or whenever the committee members run into trouble understanding details of the Plan and their interpretation. The committee sought "a better deal" from the consultants concerning fees, he said, and "as been granted" one free visit "above and beyond what the firm had already been contracted for."

Still, he said, fees for individual consultants range from \$230 to \$425 per diem. The public meetings which council intends to hold at several locations around town beginning next month will cost the town extra if the consultants are required to attend to explain certain aspects of the Plan, as Coun. Wood and Mr. Gray suggested.

The recreation director, who moments later would tender his resignation (See separate story), reported that the two initial phases in the Plan's preparation and implementation have cost a total of \$43,300.

MORE MONEY
 "This is reminiscent of another study we did that started out at \$25,000 and ended up costing us \$120,000," an angry Coun. Booth complained. "I'm very much opposed to spending any more money on this. How many more little things are we going to get hit with? We've been advised this Plan is a necessity if we're to get our official plan approved, so it's a provincial-type demand, and I'm a little concerned there isn't some money coming from the province."

"I'm very disturbed you're seeking more money for the third time. I get the feeling something happened here. I wasn't aware of," Coun. Miller agreed.

Mr. Gray commented that

costs for "finalizing" the plan, including last-minute meetings with council, are "a nebulous thing" which consultants traditionally do not address in their preliminary proposals. The \$5,000, he pointed out, is very likely more than will be needed, but some form of contingency fund must be set up so that council does not "sacrifice the effectiveness of the Plan".

In response to a question from Coun. Serjeantson, Mr. Gray acknowledged an additional \$7,000 cost for the Plan, which the federal government provided in the form of a Young Canada Works grant to hire students who worked on the document.

The recreation director added that municipal Parks Plans are now required by the province if the town is to qualify for future Wintario and other ministry of recreation grants.

Mayor Pomeroy agreed, saying that eligibility for the grants was a major reason why the town has prepared the Plan. The mayor contended that council itself is to blame for the extra costs because it did not negotiate at the outset with the consultants with regard to follow-up costs. He asked Coun. Wood and Mr. Gray whether the town could now do without the consultants when the Plan is taken before the public.

Coun. Wood replied that the committee "does not feel confident" enough to try and explain details of the Plan at the public meetings. It's "important to do this properly", he said, if the town is to avoid the possibility it may have to defend the Plan at some future Ontario Municipal Board hearing.

Mayor Pomeroy nevertheless refused to sign an agreement endorsing the consultant's remaining fees, suggesting that council should wait for the committee to complete its review and return to council with an appraisal as to whether the experts would be needed again.

"Believe me, this makes me mad," he said. "For \$43,000, they could bloody well attend a few public meetings (at no additional charge)."

Persisting in his objections, Coun. Booth asked Mr. Gray whether it was one of the consultants' recommendations to utilize the town's cemeteries for recreation.

Mr. Gray explained that the consultants had simply suggested the town could look to its cemeteries for their potential as "passive parks" for such uses as walking a dog or relaxing on a bench.

Coun. Booth maintained, however, that cemeteries had been included among the "recreational areas" listed by the consultants for future development.

In response to Coun. Knechtel's question concerning possible legal or public relations problems in the event the consultants are not asked to return, Mr. Gray insisted that council "needs the consultants back to talk about the Plan, as evidenced by the fact that the committee "is having difficulties" with the Plan. He added that the agreement before council would not automatically see the consultants hired to return, but merely sought to

endorse their suggested rates. Coun. Biehn contended that council should delay consideration of the agreement, "preferably for several years". Citing the "violent feelings" that had become apparent around the council table, he called the addition of further costs "ridiculous". If the Plan is so complicated that town staff cannot understand it sufficiently to explain it publicly, "it isn't worth it", he said.

Angry farmers picket Maple Lodge Farms

Angry Ontario chicken farmers picketed Maple Lodge Farms Ltd. outside Norval Friday to protest the importing of chickens from the United States.

The farmers want the federal government to prevent the importing of chickens from the United States. The farmers have already tried to block the delivery of an estimated 28,000 live chickens at the Canada-U.S. border at Fort Erie.

Maple Lodge Farms was selected as the target for Friday's protest because it is the largest independent processor in Ontario, and is importing 150,000 chickens per week from the United States. That figure represents more than half the total number of chickens crossing the border.

The farmers are seeking a meeting with federal agricultural minister John Wise and Ministry of Industry, Trade and Commerce Bob de Cotret to discuss ways of solving the problem.

REBEL PROCESSOR
 Lorne Nystrom, NDP food and agriculture critic, and MP for the riding of Yorkton-Melville, called Maple Lodge Farms "a rebel Ontario processor". He said the federal government and Maple Lodge Farms are shafting farmers who increased chicken production to meet rising demand in the face of higher beef prices.

Because the amount of chicken being imported from the United States has increased so dramatically recently, Ontario farmers are unable to sell their chickens, Lou Newland, a chicken producer from Wellandport, said.

The Ontario Chicken Producers Marketing Board had set a production target of 63 million pounds of eviscerated chicken and expected about 8

million pounds of chicken to be imported during the past three months, but the imports doubled, Mr. Newland said. As a result, Ontario producers are selling for four cents under their production cost, he said, and many chickens are sitting unsold.

The marketing board has indicated that it is sympathetic to the problem being suffered by the producers, and that it looks favorably on the idea of closing the border to American chickens.

Bob May, co-owner of Maple Lodge Farms, said such a move would probably put his company out of business. His plant employs 550 people and processes over 120,000 chickens a day. The chickens are sold to chain stores and fast-food outlets.

The company began to import chicken in 1976 when there was a shortage in Ontario, and the marketing board would not assist in supplying chicken to the company, Mr. May said. The company imports up to 25 per cent of its supply from the United States. Mr. May said the cost of the American and Ontario chickens are about the same.

STEADY SUPPLY
 The reason for importing chicken from the United States is because the American producers guarantee Maple Lodge Farms a steady supply, Mr. May said, a guarantee the marketing board can't or won't supply.

The chickens being imported now by Maple Lodge Farms are being imported as a result of agreements made six months ago, it was said in a statement released by the company Friday.

Mr. May said the board is discriminating against Maple Lodge Farms by preventing

the company "from buying certain products". He said the company would prefer to deal with Ontario producers, but they can't get a commitment from the board as to a continuous steady supply.

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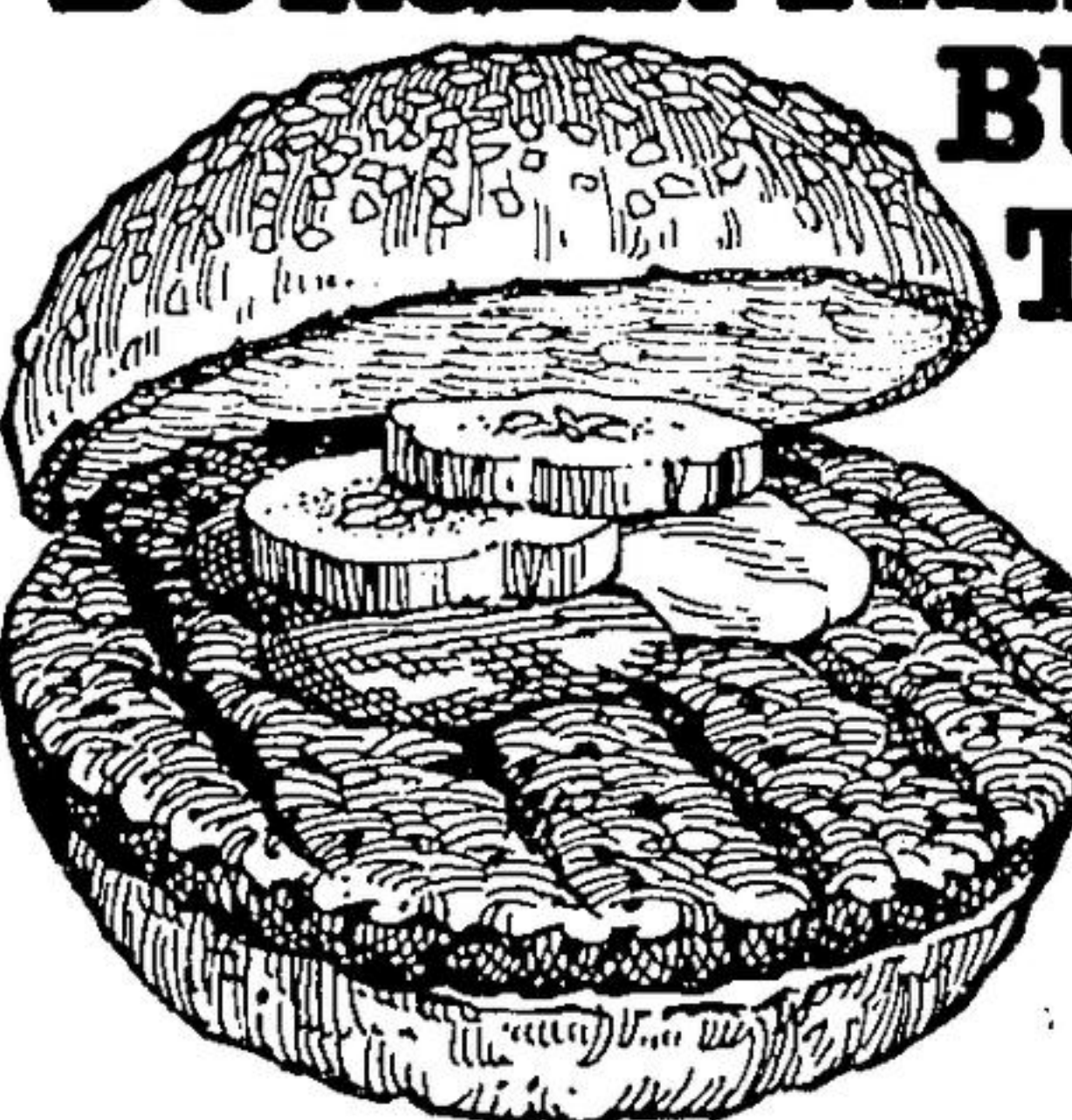
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