

Acton arena once again put on back-burner

By BEN DUMMETT
The Herald

Acton residents shouldn't expect a new arena in 1992 or 1993.

Halton Hills Budget Committee, once again reconsidered including the arena in its capital budget Tuesday, but once again a majority of committee members opposed the idea. The budget committee is comprised of Town councillors.

Tuesday's budget committee meeting marked the third such time the arena issue has been discussed. Early last month committee recommended the new arena proposal be deferred from the 1991 capital budget to 1993. Committee decided to reconsider the idea of putting it back into the 1991 budget after Acton resident Gord Chapman, on behalf of the Acton Arena User Group, presented Town council Monday with a petition signed by over 1,000 people protesting the deferral.

Asked if councillors will overturn the decision when the matter is considered by council next month, Acton Councillor Rick Bonnette was far from optimistic.

"It's another nail in the coffin," said a dejected Coun. Bonnette, following Tuesday's meeting.

Acton councillors Norm Elliott and Gerald Rennie, like Coun. Bonnette, voted for the inclusion of the arena in this year's capital budget.

Coun. Elliott said following the decision, "I don't expect councillors to change their position. We've already had two runs at it," added the councillor.

Coun. Bonnette predicted, however, the Acton councillors, along with members of the Acton community, will try again when

the budget goes before council for final approval this March.

Acton councillors also received support from Mayor Russ Miller and Budget Committee Chairman Coun. Pam Johnston.

The majority of councillors support deferring the arena to 1993 because of the cost factor. They point to the additional 7.3 per cent tax increase in 1992/93 that would result if the \$4 million project went ahead this year.

The increase would go towards paying off the arena, according to the capital budget. A majority of councillors say taxpayers would find this increase unacceptable.

However, those who wanted the arena included in the 1991 budget argued they too can't accept the approval of an extra 7.3 per cent added to the 1992 or 1993 tax rate.

Coun. Elliott said the \$4 million arena price tag is inflated, acknowledging the people of Acton recognize the financial constraints on council. Coun. Elliott said residents would willingly accept a scaled-down version of the arena being proposed. He predicted a suitable arena could be built for between \$1 million and \$2 million. That would mean an additional tax increase in 1993 of about three to four per cent, he predicted.

The people of Acton are primarily concerned that an arena be built soon because it's only a matter of time before the existing building is closed for good, Acton councillors argued.

By including the arena in the 1991 budget, Town Recreation and Parks Director Tom Shepard would be permitted to apply for provincial government funding. Since this kind of application takes a year to process people's tax bills wouldn't be affected until 1993 at the earliest, they said. In the meantime staff could be directed to find other ways, besides taxes, to finance the building, explained Coun. Elliott.

Coun. Marilyn Serjeanston said even if the impact of a new arena was only three to four per cent on the tax rate, people would still find that increase unacceptable.

The Acton Councillors warned if the Arena Arena closes and there is no replacement in Acton, Georgetown residents will suffer. Acton residents will be forced to use the Gordon Alcott Arena, which will mean less ice time for Georgetown residents, they explained.

Mayor Miller confirmed he has received several letters from Georgetown residents saying they don't want to give up a lot of ice time.

Minor variances ok'd

Halton Hills Committee of Adjustment granted minor variances to the Toronto-based Law Development Group Tuesday so the company could go ahead with construction on a stacked townhouse project involving 350 units at Mountainview Road and River Drive in Georgetown.

The development is known as Kingsmill. The minor variances were granted in connection with lot size, parking spaces, setbacks and distance between townhouses, according to Committee of Adjustment report. The minor variances come in the wake of the developer scaling down the project from close to 400 units to the current number.

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