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Halton Hills' award-winning newspaper

Ring in the new year by ringing the Acton Town Hall's bell

Volunteers at the old Acton Town Hall can hardly wait for the clock to strike 12 on New Year's Eve as they were scrambling Tuesday to have the grand hall ready for last night's party. Among those taking care of last-minute details, including a test of the "ringability" of the town hall's bell, are (clockwise, from front) Marisa Kidd, Brenda La Rosa, fundraising chair Kathleen Dilk, committee chair Ron Birell, and Gail Kerr. The facility will be officially opened later in the new year.

Photo by Ted Brown

Building permit drop results in \$300K deficit

By CYNTHIA GAMBLE
Staff Writer

The Town's Building Services department is projecting a \$300,000 deficit in 2009—and possibly \$550,000 in 2010—due to a reduction in large revenue-producing housing permits.

According to a recent staff report, the Town has issued about the same number of permits in 2009 as it did in 2008 and 2007. But the difference lies in number of residential subdivision units and large industrial/commercial projects.

In 2005, 829 new home construction permits were issued, and that dropped to 358 in 2006, 258 in 2007, 96 in 2008 and 144 as of Sept. 30, 2009. But 81 of the 2009 permits were applied for and paid for in 2008.

Similarly commercial/industrial building permits ranged from a high of 73 in 2007 to 2009's low of 46 (as of Sept. 30).

Even pool enclosure permits are down from 125 in 2008 to only 76 in 2009 as of Sept. 30.

Only residential additions and renovation permits seem to be keeping pace with past years' results.

In 2005, the Town issued close to 1,500 building permits. This year that total will be half that number and as a result, revenues are down. The Town is facing a \$300,000 deficit in building permit revenues.

In 2010, the Town is projecting permits for 408 new homes—assuming the additional water from the Region's groundwater well system is approved to serve at least 243 of the new homes. If the water isn't released and those homes aren't built, the Town is looking at a shortfall in revenue in the range of \$550,000 next year—and permit fees for new homes will have to be raised by 60 per cent in 2011.

The projected 2009 \$300,000 deficit will be shifted to a deferred revenue account and paid off over the next three to four years, when water approvals allowing more housing occurs. To compensate for the downturn, the Town will also increase its building permit fees in 2010 by 10 per cent. The department will also introduce a number of new fees including administration fees, sign variance application fee and solar collector and wind turbine fees.

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