

Council almost unanimous in supporting three arenas

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The majority of Halton Hills council voted to go ahead with the three-arena program with the lone exception being Wards 3&4 Regional Councillor Jane Fogal, who said it was not the financially prudent option nor does it balance the needs of the community. She said option D—the quadding of Mold-Masters SportsPlex and a wait and see on the rest of the program after the tendering of those rinks was the better way to go.

“It provides two arenas up front and maybe a third one And it pays more attention to the taxpayers.”

After the meeting Fogal told *The Independent & Free Press* it was ironic that council would agree to spend \$29.2 million but would not replace the \$20,000 from the previously cut budget of the Halton Hills Cultural Roundtable (an umbrella group for dozens of local cultural and heritage groups), even after she had found savings elsewhere in the budget for it.

Fogal thought she had reached a majority consensus on council for Op-

tion D before the meeting, she said, but failed to get it on the table before Option A was moved by Councillor Bryan Lewis.

Throwing back Lewis’s well-known and often-used quote, Fogal said “it’s better to go slow and get it right, than fast and get it wrong.”

Councillor Ann Lawlor, who said she voted for Option A reluctantly, said “excess spending could leave us into a financial strait-jacket unable to respond to financial emergencies or opportunities.”

But Mayor Rick Bonnette said, “I don’t think the Town staff would be recommending Option A if they didn’t think it was doable and they had confidence in it.”

And the announcement by the Halton Hills Arena Users Group (HHAUG) during the meeting that they would be committing to about \$5.86 million over the term of the 10-year debenture seemed to sway some councillors to go ahead with the full program right now. That commitment was about \$1.8 million more than Halton Hills Town staff were using in their reports. It includes



JANE FOGAL



Several hundred arena users marched from Mold-Masters SportsPlex to Christ the King Secondary School Monday before sitting in on the special Town council meeting in which councillors voted to go ahead with a plan for three new ice surfaces.

Photo by Ted Brown

a commitment to a \$2 million fundraising campaign as well as user fee surcharges and one-time registration charges worth about \$3.8 million over the next 10 years.

In his presentation to council, HHAUG’s Georgetown Minor Hockey Association rep Carson Minnich, said, “What we came up with was a shared responsibility of \$5.86 million. ...We thought of the seniors’ situation, of the cyclists and of the walkers over this whole process, and asked how can we make this thing happen for us? ...We thought by sharing (the financial load) we could put the arenas ahead (in the

capital budget).”

“If they can reach that \$2 million target, all the best for the financing,” said Town Treasurer Ed DeSousa. “And their user charge of \$3.75 million is a bit higher than our figure of \$3 million and again if those numbers are attainable it’s much better from the financing aspect.”

The Town has signed commitments from HHAUG representatives to fully utilize all six pads when the new ones are built, said Recreation and Parks Director Terry Alyman.

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