

Neighbours raise concerns about Halton Place— again

By **CYNTHIA GAMBLE**
Staff Writer

“Enough is enough” cried both Halton Hills council and the neighbours surrounding Halton Place equestrian farm on 15 Sideroad, which is seeking a Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC) permit for unlimited horse shows in perpetuity.

That NEC application will be dealt with at this Thursday’s Commission meeting— NEC staff are recommending refusal of the application, stating a Niagara Escarpment Plan amendment is required to recognize the permanent special recreation/commercial use of the property. The refusal is based on “the general intensity level of use, permanent nature of use and added components increasing to the point at which a NEP amendment is necessary.”

About a half-dozen residents turned out at the March 8 council meeting to support a Town report advising the NEC of its objection to Halton Place’s application. The Town objects to the request to:

- Hold an unlimited number of horse shows each year in perpetuity
- Permitting overnight stays for horse owners, riders and training staff in their own trailers during the shows
- Permitting ancillary activities such as charity fundraisers and social gathering
- Allowing no limits on the morning start and evening end times of the shows.

The Town did agree to accept six shows in 2011, under the same terms and condi-

tions as previous years provided a new application was filed. Council also approved an amendment notifying the NEC the Town won’t approve any more events after 2011 unless all outstanding building permits are closed and site plans are approved, and that Town staff take all appropriate steps to ensure compliance with the building permits.

Halton Place solicitor Thomas Arnold said the in perpetuity application for an unlimited of horse shows, “is to further develop Halton Place as an agricultural business similar to Chudleigh’s (apple farm) for example.”

He said Halton Place provides the town with significant economic benefits, supports local businesses and attracts thousands of tourists each year.

Arnold said six shows per year are planned for and since horse shows must be approved by the equestrian sanctioning body months in advance, the in perpetuity clause aids Halton Place in their future planning. But he said Halton Place may wish to host amateur shows— for example about 30 young riders on Friday afternoon— but would be required to file a NEC application.

“That process takes months and is not practical in that situation,” he said. He added the ancillary events— charity fundraisers that part of the horse shows— have been previously approved by the NEC, and the overnight stays by owners and train-



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ers are for the health and safety of their horses, and not for the general public. He estimates about 60 trailers/per show would stay overnight.

Arnold said Halton Place has been addressing a number of ongoing issues such as noise levels and manure placement and offered to meet with Town staff to discuss terms and conditions that could be attached if the Town were to approve Halton Place’s application.

But three residents— neighbours of Halton Place— spoke at Tuesday’s council meeting in support of the Town recommendation not to approve the application.

Speaking on behalf of 15 homeowners surrounding Halton Place, resident Mike Shantz said acceptance of this permit would have “a monumental negative impact to our environment if this application is allowed to proceed. This is our nightmare coming true. We hope council will deny open-ended commercialization of the Halton Place property.”

Shantz called the in perpetuity request a “do whatever we want” permit and he said it seems Halton Place has been building whatever they wanted since 2003, without penalty. He said he called Town bylaw office twice last year for excessive noise.

“Until the conditions of approvals are followed, noise control, building permits corrected and after-hours parties have been stopped, overnight camping is just out of the

question,” said Shantz, who recommended that the number of shows be reduced from six to four to show a clear message that the rules must be followed.

He and the other speakers, Rob Brettle and Ron Morin expressed frustration that Halton Place constantly flouts regulations without consequence.

A frustrated Brettle told council there are too many agencies involved and nobody wants to take responsibility to get the owners to do the right thing.

Wards 1&2 Regional Councillor Clark Somerville agreed. “As a representative for that area. I’ve had enough. ...Every year we seem to get a song and dance of ‘yes we will do this’ and ‘yes we will do that’. What assurances can we have that anything will be done?” he said.

Arnold said Halton Place faces the challenge of satisfying the conflicting jurisdictions (of the NEC, Town and Conservation Halton). “There is a great overlap of requirements,” he said.

Morin said past performance should be a good indication of future performance. He noted the neighbours had been fighting for the last four to five years such as issues as noise, maintaining local rural character, land values, and natural environment.

“We relying on the agencies to make them (Halton Place) accountable because without you we’re powerless,” said Morin. “I believe they should be allowed to have certain events on a certain level but not the whole 200 acres (of commercialization).”

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