

# Town, private road residents at odds over maintenance fee

By **CYNTHIA GAMBLE**  
Staff Writer

After being given notice the Town would no longer maintain their private road after January 31, Bennett Place residents appealed for continuation of Town maintenance at a recent Halton Hills council meeting.

Speaking on behalf of the majority of the owners/residents, Bennett Place resident, Michael Bennett, told council he was disappointed in the process and the lack of Town consultation with residents.

"Unfortunately the Town and council made its decision without any discussion or consultation with Bennett Place landowners and we were not given an opportunity to try to resolve the payment issue or manage service expectations," said Bennett.

In 1996, Town staff and Bennett Place residents agreed verbally to an arrangement for the Town to do winter maintenance and an annual grading of the private lane for nine homes in Glen Williams. In turn, the residents agreed to a set annual rate that would increase each year at the same rate the rural tax rate increases. But some residents didn't agree, and would not provide the funds to the

resident designated to collect the monies to pay the Town invoice. The Town was then forced to separate the cost and send individual bills to each household. When funds were still not forthcoming, the cost was added to the resident's tax bill. Staff says often the time spent preparing the invoices and attempting to collect cost more than the amount of the bill.

So council, after repeated staff meetings with the residents to resolve maintenance concerns and to collect payments, decided in October to issue 90 days notice that the Town would cease on Jan. 31, 2012 its agreement, and the residents would be responsible for their own street maintenance. A registered letter was sent to each resident in October.

Bennett said the residents didn't agree with the Town's calculation of costs to provide the service—grading three times per year including five tonnes of granular gravel, \$770 and winter control, 16 events/year plowing and sanding \$2,000. That total works out to \$2,770 + HST or \$307.77 + HST per resident/year.

"Bennett Place is a short road. It requires no more than two to three minutes to plow or sand," said Bennett. "...It's hard for us to accept the cost that it is quoted



Resident Michael Bennett (right) addressed council recently over a Town decision to halt maintenance of Bennett Place, a private road.

Left photo by Cynthia Gamble/Top photo by Ted Brown

as a reasonable allocation that the Town would be looking to cost re-

cover from."

The amount is also far above—more than 500 per cent—charged by the Town in 2010 which was about \$50/per resident, said Bennett.

He asked that the original verbal agreement remain in effect and that one resident be responsible to collect the cash. He told council he would guarantee payment in full and he brought with him a cheque for \$524.97 based on the previous fee of \$51.62 +HST per resident. He asked that future increases be based on the rate of inflation.

Wards 1&2 Councillor Clark

Somerville pointed out that materials and supply costs have risen more than rate of inflation, while Ward 3 Councillor Moya Johnson said that full cost recovery refers to more than just driving the snowplow up and down the road—it also includes other costs such as gas, truck wear and tear and insurance.

"We're willing to pay what it costs if the allocation is reasonable and correct," said Bennett. "We don't believe the allocation that we were presented with from the Town is reasonable."

Ward 2 Bryan Lewis also told Bennett that it was unfair to say the Town has made no effort to meet with residents and discuss the issues, saying his records show repeated emails, telephone calls

and meetings dating back to 2007. However, Bennett said he was referring to after the Town decided to terminate the contract.

Bennett said they have investigated private contractors but they are for-profit businesses that are "ridiculously expensive".

"It was a good deal from the Town and it's a shame the residents couldn't recognize that it was a great deal and when we asked, paid for it," said Lewis.

"Please don't dispute what the Town says it costs. You may not like it ... if you don't pay (the full-cost), we're effectively saying to everybody else that we all have to chip in to pay for Bennett Place to be plowed or graded."

Council agreed to Ward 2 Councillor Joan Robson's motion to continue the winter maintenance beyond January 31 on a cost-recovery basis to allow a new agreement to be negotiated.

If they don't agree, they won't have the service, she said.

Lewis agreed, saying a solution must be hammered out in town/resident meetings, adding the days of verbal agreements are long gone.

Town staff will report back in February on the status of the negotiations.

## SUMMER FOOTBALL IS BACK!!!



### IMPROVE YOURSELF AS AN ATHLETE THE CRIMSON TIDE WAY:

- Safely learn the sport of football
- Improve your physical fitness
- Develop leadership skills
- Learn sportsmanship as part of a team

### 2012 REGISTRATION UNDERWAY!

• Register online at: [www.haltonhillsfootball.com](http://www.haltonhillsfootball.com) or come visit us at one of our registration events:

- Saturday January 28<sup>th</sup>, 9:00am – 5:00pm, Georgetown Mall (by the Independent)
- Saturday February 4<sup>th</sup>, 9:00am – 5:00pm, Milton Sports Center (South Entrance)

### 2012 PROGRAMS:

- House League (2000-2004 Birthdays)
- Crimson Tide Rep (1993 – 2000 Birthdays)

# ROLL TIDE!!!