

The ROCKWOOD Miller

Township Digest

No abate in boundary debate

From the beginning, at least two Rockwood parents felt a school board boundary review would end with their kids, French Immersion (FI) students being sent to Erin schools, including Brisbane PS and Erin District High School. “We felt from the whole time it was a done deal – I mean, we’re going down with a fight,” parent Jennifer Brisbin said on Sunday, adding 14 delegations of unhappy parents were listed to speak at the Upper Grand District School Board

meeting on Tuesday night. She said they will try to show the Board is using “questionable numbers and questionable policies” in the boundary decisions, forced by overcrowding at East Guelph schools, under-capacity Erin schools and a need to bolster the FI program in Erin schools.

At last Tuesday’s committee meeting, Trustees made concessions to the so-called East Wellington – Rockwood, Eden Mills and Everton – parents

who don’t want their kids to go to Erin schools. Grade five students can stay at Edward Johnson PS for Grade six, and then continue as usual to John McCrae and John F. Ross for high school. Students in other grades can apply for an out-of-area exemption and can attend Guelph’s King George PS until June 2014.

“They’re willing to grandfather us in until 2014, but our home school will still be Erin,” Brisbin said, adding if trustees accept the East Wellington

recommendations, they will look for a new home within the Guelph school boundary during the two years that her children, one entering JK in September and one is Grade two, will be grandfathered at King George PS.

At Tuesday’s meeting, Trustees were also expected to ratify a committee decision to continue to provide busing to East Wellington FI students, and not cut it, as initially suggested by staff in the boundary review.

More recyclables

Milk and juice cartons – so called “gable-top” cartons – drink boxes and frozen food boxes can now be recycled with Wellington County’s expansion of its Blue Box program, designed to divert 20-tonnes from the County’s two landfills annually.

Juice, soup and soy boxes are now accepted in the Blue Box, along with ice cream and frozen entree cartons. The County said revenue from the sale of the additional recycled materials is expected to offset the additional cost of collecting and processing the materials, so taxpayers will not pay more for waste management.

Break a leg

Auditions will be held February 9 for Century Church Theatre Guild’s staging of the mystery thriller *Murder By The Book* at the Hillsburgh playhouse. Auditions are at 7:30 p.m. at the theatre, with call-backs the next day, if needed. For details visit www.centurychurchtheatre.com and go to auditions.

Marden marathon

Organizers of the Marden Marathon have permission – subject to regular event conditions – to use Township roads for the second annual road race, sponsored by the Elora Road Christian School as a fundraiser for Groves Memorial Hospital Foundation. Noting the event raised \$10,000 for the hospital last year, Guelph-Eramosa Township councillors supported the permit application for the April 14 event, centred at the Township’s Royal Distributing Athletic Performance Centre at Marden.

Councillors balked at approving the organizers’ request to waive the Township’s \$2 per participant fee, used to defer administration and road closure costs – organizers said only a small portion of the Fourth Line in Guelph-Eramosa will be used for

the races, and it will not be closed completely.

To support the integrity of the Townships’ new event policy and the \$2 fee, Councillor John Scott suggested that they collect the fee from participants, and then make a grant in the same amount – approximately \$700 – to the Hospital Foundation. In support, Councillor Doug Breen said, “then, we can make up our mind (about support) for each (request) that comes through. If somebody else requests it and it’s a not-for-profit, we can think about it...” Breen said.

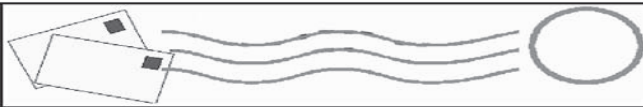
Mayor Chris White supported charging the \$2 fee, noting it is part of the new Township policy developed in response to complaints about problems with road races. “We set this up for a reason, and then the first one that comes to us we waive it?” White asked, before Council unanimously approved to okay the Marathon, and the per-participant fee.

Turf care machine

Township Council approved a pre-budget purchase for a synthetic turf sweeper for the Royal Distributing Performance Centre. In order to get delivery in time for this year’s winter season, Township Manager of Parks and Recreation asked for, and received, permission to order the \$9,500 sweeper in advance of budget debate and approval. The machine’s cost will be paid from a Development Charges Reserve Fund.

The Royal received some high praise from a competitor on Saturday when Mike O’Leary, the general manager of Acton’s indoor artificial turf facility, the Dufferin Rural Heritage Centre, said the Guelph-Eramosa facility, known as Marden, is “really something” with a running track around the outside of a beautiful building. He said the only down side is poor signing that makes the facility hard to find.

Letters



A Rockwood parent’s plea

Editor’s note: This letter was sent to Upper Grand District School Board, and shared with the Rockwood Miller.

Dear Mr. Borden,

I am a Rockwood parent of two daughters – one who is currently thriving in Sr. Kindergarten at Edward Johnson, and a younger daughter who will enrol in 2014.

I understand that under the current modified plan to the boundary review, my eldest will likely be sent to King George next year. However, when it comes time for my youngest to enrol in JK – she will not be able to register at King George. At this point, not knowing where my youngest will be permitted to enrol greatly affects my decision of where to enrol my 5-year-old. I would like to ensure some stability in my children’s education, and feel that this is now being severely compromised. Erin is not

a feasible option for our family, as logistically and geographically it simply will not work.

It appears my options are as follows:

1. Enrol my daughter at King George next year, and remove her in 2014 as her sister will not be permitted to join her, nor will she any longer be “accepted” at King George. (Making her attend 3 different schools in 4 years).
2. Drop out of the French Immersion programme, and expect my daughter to leave all of her friends, as well as adjust to new curriculum and environment in an all-French school in Guelph.
3. Drop out of the French Immersion programme, and enrol at an already overcrowded Rockwood Centennial, where my daughter will

likely join up with other Rockwood FI children, but where she will lose a rich part of her education, and heritage as I myself am francophone.

Every family is now faced with these *huge* decisions. Decisions unlike others who are involved in typical school boundary reviews... I wonder how it is possible to move kids completely out of the city they are currently in, rather than relocate them within the city. This is a tremendous change, and not one we anticipated when we moved to Rockwood. I would have always expected FI to be accessible through Guelph, and hopefully Rockwood in the near future.

Is it not possible to the Board to reroute our East Wellington children to King George, and accept their

upcoming siblings and new enrolments from the community, until a school in Rockwood can accommodate them? It is hardly a large group (I believe less than 30 JK-4 kids?).

I know you, and the Board, are busy looking at possibilities. I do hope that tomorrow’s decision is not made in haste, and that the Board *truly* understands the needs of East Wellington families. If you do, you will no doubt vote in favour of helping these families, families like mine.... Without your support we are all facing on overwhelmingly challenging decision, but with your support we can work together to find much more suitable options to provide the best education and balanced life for our children.

Thank you so very much for your time,
Julie McFater
Rockwood, On