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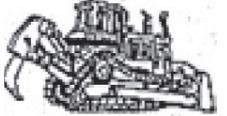
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Town Digest

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Integrated accessibility
Policies that will enable the Town to meet the goal of being totally accessible by 2025 received general committee approval last week with endorsement of the Integrated Accessibility Standard, which covers employment, transportation, and information and communications standards in one regulation.

Clerk Suzanne Jones said the Town can make the provincial regulations work in Halton Hills “by embracing (the regulations) as a means of meeting the needs of our customers and by building on the accessible customer experience – the first standard to become law.”

Council’s approval of the draft accessible plan in December will trigger development, implementation and maintenance of multi-year plan to govern how the Town will achieve accessibility as mandated by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. It treats people with disabilities with respect for their dignity and independence, makes reasonable efforts to provide equal opportunities and allows them to benefit from the same service, in the same place and in a similar way to others.

“This is a really important piece of work...” according to Georgetown Councillor Moya Johnson, chair of the Town’s Accessibility Advisory Committee, adding thanks to staff who worked on the policies that make Halton Hills “one of the leaders in accessibility.”

User fee increase
How does the Town justify an across-the-board three per cent in user and licensing fees and service charges? Regional/Ward Two Councillor Jane Fogal, noting that inflation is not running at three per cent and that she is being questioned by ratepayers about potential tax increases, asked staff for an explanation last week.

Treasurer and Manager of Corporate Services, Ed DeSousa said the Town’s five-year model includes a three per cent increase in each year, money they’d have to add to the operating budget if the rate was lowered – he also said the current inflation rate is closer to 1.6 or 1.7 per cent.

Fogal noted there is no increase in taxi cab tariffs and was advised by staff the status quo is recommended because tariffs increased last year and were passed on to taxi passengers. Fogal suggested that if the price of gas increased, then passengers should pay increased tariffs to cover it, not the cab driver. Staff said the cab industry could ask Council for reconsideration when the new user and licensing fees and service charges are approved on November 26.

By the numbers
The latest age and sex data from the 2011 Census showing that there is no one aged zero to four years in Halton Hills is a “graphing error” according to Town staff who presented the information to general committee last week. Georgetown Councillor Moya Johnson pointed to the absence of data on a population pyramid and asked if it was

a mistake or “if we have closed up shop in Halton Hills as far as babies are concerned?” Another chart showed Halton Hills has a higher proportion of children 14 and under than other Halton municipalities – except Milton – and Halton Region and the province.

The latest data showed Halton Hills is made up of 49.5 per cent males and 50.5 per cent females, and the median age of the population of Halton Hills increased to 39.9 years from 36.3 years between 2001 and 2012. The proportion of seniors – those 65 and older – increased to 11.9 per cent, up from 10.2 per cent in the 2006 Census.

No Smart Meter concern
While the Ontario Fire Marshall issued safety concerns about potential fire hazards with Smart Meters, there have not been any incidents or concerns in Halton Hills. Since last May, seven incidents of smouldering fires and/or explosions involving the meters have been reported – incidents resulting from problems with the metre bases, installation of failed meters.

In an update last Monday to general committee, Fire Chief Brent Marshall reported that the installation program by Halton Hills Hydro was different than in other locations, and because the installations were done in-house, “there’s been no indication at all that we’ve had any difficulties in Halton Hills,” Chief Marshall said, adding there have not been any problems in North America with the type of Smart Meter used in Halton Hills.

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