

Town investigates waiving development fees

BY FRANCES NIBLOCK
The Acton Tanner

In an effort to lure developers to town, Council wants to know if it can legally repeal or waive non-residential development charges when no added servicing is required.

Development charges are the fees developers pay to the Town for services like roads, water and sewers that are made necessary by the development.

Debate over waiving some development charges began with a request from a businessman, who said if the fees would be waived for an expansion to an empty

Georgetown factory, he would bring 130 jobs to Halton Hills.

Although Council initially favoured waiving the fees, a legal opinion said that the charges can not be waived without changing the Development Charges Act. A review of that legislation will be done in the spring.

With certain conditions, all three Acton Councillors favour deferring non-residential development charges and reviewing the current policy.

Councillor Norm Elliott, a member of the economic development committee, said in some cases it's good business to forego fees.

"In the past three years the Town has collected only about \$16,000 in development charges. This applicant's proposal would bring many more times that amount in economic benefits, including building permit fees and extra taxes," Elliott said recently.

Elliott noted that the applicant would not have to pay the fees if he moved to any of the three other locations he is considering.

"I'm prepared to say waive the fees and worry about the precedent later. Development is critical, with its jobs creation and millions of dollars in spin-off benefits, including wages and taxes."

Acton Councillor Rick Bonnette is also not worried about setting a precedent by deferring the non-residential fees.

"How many similar businesses with 130 employees have come to

Halton Hills? There haven't been too many," Bonnette said.

"Development should pay for itself but there should not be a charge if an expansion or new business does not generate the need for any additional services."

Councillor Gerald Rennie questioned whether a blanket repeal for all charges would work.

"I think that you have to weigh each request on its own merit. If there is no additional cost to the Town because there are no new services, then the fees should not be charged," Rennie said last week.

"I don't think we should charge fees in an instance like this when surrounding municipalities don't.

"The province won't let us give bonuses or forgive fees so there is only so much we can do to remain competitive. Deferring or waiving fees will attract businesses."

Food bank boss enjoys new post

BY DOUG HARRISON
The Acton Tanner

Not even a hectic schedule of running her own business and tending to family needs could stop Pat Hatch from filling her life with another love — the community.

The 45-year-old mother of two is two months into her latest venture as the Acton FoodShare's new co-ordinator — she replaced Loretta Duclos who stepped down for personal reasons — and couldn't be happier.



PAT HATCH

"I've always given to the FoodShare and to other charities and I know a lot of people use it," says the 11-year Acton resident. "Former co-ordinator Joan Waldie did such a good job that everything is very stable."

The open co-ordinator's position initially caught the eye of Hatch, but she worried about how she would balance her full-time work, heading *Personal Secretarial Services* in Georgetown, and be co-ordinator. But after speaking with Waldie and FoodShare volunteer Eileen Dix she decided to go for it.

"I knew I would like it. I decided to take it because it was helping in the community," Hatch said. "I'm happy with the way it's going."

"Right now we have the most food we've ever had on the shelves, and Christmas is coming. People seem to give more around Christmas."

Hatch praised the work of the FoodShare volunteers and the response of the community for making her job easier.

"The volunteers are excellent," she comments of the four or five people who help each week. "They do all the work. Basically, I'm overseeing the FoodShare and I'm there if a question comes up and to make the final decision."

Hatch feels she hasn't served enough time as co-ordinator to comment on what her long-term goals in that capacity are, "but the people are great — the volunteers and residents of Acton. It's a giving community and we want to help our own (people) first."



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