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Rep gets 'public spanking'

BY FRANCES NIBLOCK
 The Rockwood Miller

Simmering behind-the-scenes conflicts between Eramosa's reeve and deputy-reeve erupted in public at last Monday's Township Council meeting during which two of the three other councillors also questioned the deputy reeve's motives and political style.

Deputy Reeve Dave Adsett's reasons for recently contacting the Ministry of Municipal Affairs (MMA) are behind the dispute.

Reeve Hughes believes Adsett asked for an investigation of Council's action - a belief bolstered by a letter he saw, or was told about, from the MMA to Adsett.

The letter, although addressed to Adsett's home, mistakenly ended up at the Township office where it was opened, date stamped and talked about.

Adsett will not release the correspondence, saying he had been advised by a lawyer to "keep a lid on that letter."

Adsett said his contact with MMA was to "get answers to a few questions" and find out what seminars of courses the ministry offered to municipal politicians.

The dispute went public last Monday night when Hughes read a statement criticizing Adsett for his "unsubstantiated criticism" and indicating that he would personally welcome any investigation because he was confident no one had done anything wrong.

"I would like to express my personal disappointment that Deputy Reeve Adsett has so little respect for this Council that he elected to go to Municipal Affairs with his concerns, without first bringing them forward for Council's consideration," Hughes read.

The Reeve's statement prompted one member of the public gallery to ask what was going on. "My heart is in my throat because of your announcement," Ron Oelbaum told council. Oelbaum is a Rockwood developer.

"It is a very scary proposition to learn on this occasion that there is not a collaborative process among members of Council.

"I'm wondering if it is going to be possible to do business if there is dissension among Council, for whatever reason," Oelbaum said.

At this point Councillor Mark Thomsen said he wanted to make

a public statement as well.

Thomsen said he rarely criticizes fellow Councillors because he respects their differences, and without naming the Deputy Reeve, said Council must begin to communicate effectively.

Looking at Adsett, Thomsen said, "This would include solicitation of Council on issues pertaining to the municipality, before these issues reach the public or the press."

Thomsen complained he had received a call from the press asking for a comment on Adsett's approach to MMA, but knew nothing about it.

Adsett held his comments until later in the meeting when Council was debating his motion inviting MMA to come to Eramosa to conduct seminars to establish guidelines so Council, staff and consultants can work in a "more structured and efficient manner."

In his defense of what he called a "public spanking," Deputy Reeve Adsett said his motion was a very serious attempt to try to improve Council's operations.

"If we deal with Municipal Affairs and come up with various ways on handling situations and policies, we can make this a better and stronger Council," Adsett said.

Councillor Cathy McIntyre reminded Adsett that they all had attended training seminars offered by the Association of Municipalities of Ontario.

"I'm beginning to wonder if you went to Municipal Affairs even before you asked us about them coming," McIntyre said as she told Adsett she wanted to see a copy of the MMA letter. Adsett replied, "No problem."

Council voted to defer Adsett's motion until their clerk contacts the MMA and report back on what seminars are available.

Adsett also served notice that at the next meeting he wants to debate a motion that mail addressed to Council or staff not be opened by Township staff because doing so infringes on personal rights.

Blackmail allegation rankles councillor

Councillor Gord Tosh wants to sanction the Friends of Eden Mills citizen group for remarks one of its members made in a recent edition of *The Rockwood Miller*.

At last Monday's Eramosa Township Council meeting, Tosh asked Michael Keefer if his quote, calling Council's latest offer in the Bowstring bridge debate "blackmail," was accurate.

When Keefer replied that it was accurate, and asked Tosh if he wanted an explanation, Tosh questioned whether it was appropriate to publicly criticize Council for an illegal act.

Council had offered to consider aesthetic enhancements for a new bridge, if the Friends of Eden Mills would abandon its fight to save the

aging, Bowstring bridge, which is a heritage structure.

"You're mistaken Mr. Tosh, if you take that (the blackmail quote) to be an allegation of illegal activity. It's not," Keefer said as he explained that 88% of Eden Mills residents view Council's decision to replace the bridge as "fiscally irresponsible and short-sighted."

After Tosh and Keefer debated the unknown costs for both replacing and repairing the bridge, Tosh tabled a notice of motion asking that, because of the blackmail comment, future Councils should deal with the Eden Mills group only through official correspondence, approved by Council.

That motion will be debated at a future meeting.



RISING STAR! Eden Mills' Kimberly Moffit wore this dress to sing *All I Ask of You*, from *Phantom of the Opera*, at the recent *Rising Star Youth Talent* contest at the CNE. Kimberly was one of four finalists in the Solo Vocal category. (Doug Harrison photo)

Minor Ball talks Monday

The Rockwood-Eramosa Minor Ball Association is planning a general meeting for Monday (Sept. 18) at 7:30 pm.

The meeting, which takes place at Rockmosa, will be an opportu-

nity to discuss the past season and make plans for next summer.

All interested residents are invited to attend; phone Sherri Thompson at 856-9918 for further information.

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