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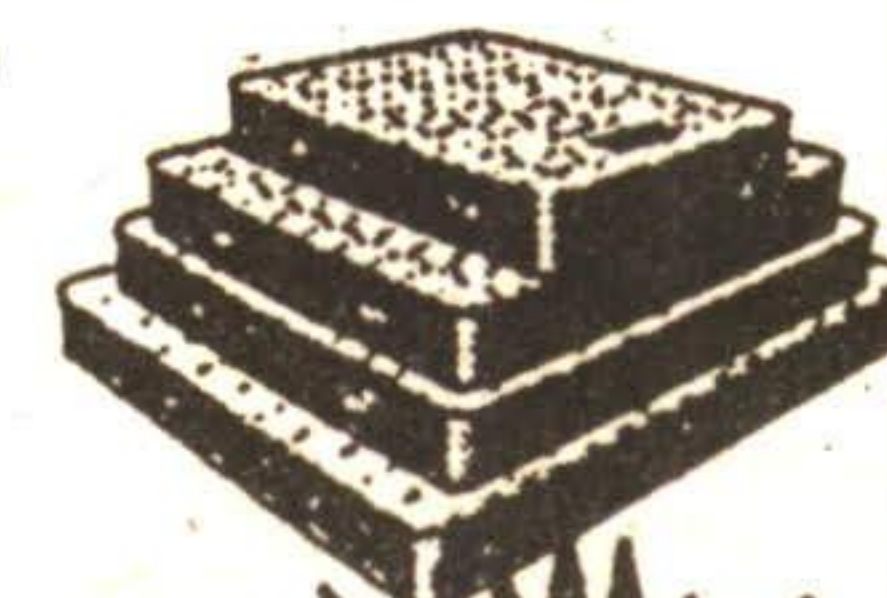
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Eramosa Council votes to replace Bowstring Bridge

BY FRANCES NIBLOCK
The Rockwood Miller

Eramosa Council has rejected a proposed compromise to build a new one-lane bridge to replace the aging Bowstring Bridge in Eden Mills and will proceed with plans to construct a modern two-lane structure this summer. Council will also move to repeal the by-law that designated the bridge as a Heritage Structure.

Bridge replacement opponents, a group known as the Friends of Eden Mills, expressed disappointment but not surprise with Council's decision, made at a special meeting on Monday night. Friends of Eden Mills spokesman Chris Wilson vowed they will continue the fight against a two-lane bridge, which they claim will ruin the quiet rural atmosphere of the village with increased traffic speed and volume.

"We have the Environmental Assessment process to go through and we will explore all legal avenues that governments have given us," Wilson explained when asked what the group's next step will be.

"Senior levels of government - Heritage and Parks Canada - say they want that bridge saved because it affects the entire character of the village and that Council has not explored all other avenues, including a condition survey."

Reeve Rick Hughes opened the meeting by noting that although his initial

investigations into building a narrower bridge hadn't been promising, he would continue to explore the possibility of getting a structure that will be esthetically pleasing and that will alleviate, as much as possible, the concerns of Eden Mills residents.

"I think my best bet is prob-

ably to communicate with the Minister (of Transportation) and see if there's any flexibility in the bridge structure program," Hughes said. He added that after some 20 years of debate about the bridge it would be a "shame" if the situation was not brought to closure this year.

There is a "strong possibility" that the existing bridge will have to be closed to all but pedestrians within the year if nothing is done.

Council extended the current maximum weight restrictions on the bridge for three more months but Hughes noted that beyond that time

the Township engineer would most likely have to review the structure which, ironically, would include doing a condition survey - a repeated request of Friends of Eden Mills rejected by Council.

After hearing the Reeve talk about the possibility of a narrower bridge, and know-

ing that Councillor Nadia Martin was going to put forward a motion calling for a new single-lane structure, Deputy Reeve Dave Adsett said that procedurally, neither Hughes nor Martin were in a position to try to re-open Council's February 1995 de-

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BOWSTRING BRIDGE: Township Council on Monday voted to build a controversial new two-lane bridge in Eden Mills. (Eve Martin photo)

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