

Tax hike of 8% is correct – Council

Tax increases for Guelph/Eramosa residents will remain at the 8.6 per cent announced in June.

In a report to council municipal treasurer Laura Smith said resident Joe Martin was incorrect in making his recent warnings about the increase actually being more like 41 per cent. His calculations were based on the municipality's total assessment without considerations for the various tax rates for residential, commercial, industrial and multi-residential properties.

Smith said the municipality needs to raise 41.89 per cent more money this year than it did in 2000, but this does not mean individual taxpayers' rates rise by that amount.

Last year's residential mill rate was .0112920 while this year the rate is .014034. Residents can still determine their taxes by multiplying their current assessment by this year's

mill rate.

Residents facing big changes in their taxes have probably seen increases in their Current Value Assessment rates, she said. If that valuation did not change their tax increase will only be 8.6 per cent.

Using the example of a property valued at \$152,000 in 2000, with a \$28,000 assessment increase for 2001, Smith said that equals an 18.4 per cent tax increase. By 2000 rates, the property would have generated \$1,964 in taxes. This year, with an assessed value of \$180,000, the taxes would rise to \$2,526. That is an increase of \$562 or 28.6 per cent.

The \$28,000 increase in assessment will add \$393 to the taxes while the mill rate increase will only add \$169.

Relieved that they weren't misinterpreting something in their calculations, council approved the 2001 budget.

Raise sewer, water rate

At the recommendation of its consultants, Guelph/Eramosa council has decided to raise its base monthly rate for water and sewers to 2002 levels this year.

Gary Scanlon of C.N. Watson and Associates Ltd. told council 2001 will be almost over before bylaws can be approved setting new rates for the municipality. Since residential rates need to increase by \$1 per month in Rockwood in 2002 in order to pay for expansion and upkeep of the system, the increases might as well be done all at once rather than do an increase for this year, then do another for the beginning of next year. That will give both Rockwood and the Guelph Township system users a base rate of \$4 per month.

Scanlon said the Guelph Township system is already at its maximum size but over the next five years Rockwood's system is expected to grow by about 75 units annually. That amounts

to a growth rate of about seven per cent for both sewers and water

During that period council will need to spend about \$1.247 million for expansion and repairs to the Rockwood system, and another \$223,500 in Guelph Township.

Scanlon suggested council loan itself the funds it will need for these capital works from its reserve funds and repay those loans over the next 10 years. This would save approximately 10 per cent of its annual debt charges without depleting the reserves.

Since both the Guelph Township and Rockwood systems were constructed in the 1970s, Scanlon predicted they will need repair and replacement in the next few years. It is an emerging trend in municipal finances is to establish long term lifecycle reserves for these replacements, he said, and recommending the municipality consider doing this.

CHIPS

Public meeting set

Guelph/Eramosa council will hold a public meeting at the municipal office on Aug. 7 to gather input on an application to convert an old mill into a family home.

Jeff and Linda Scott received a severance for 6 acres on the Third Line at Birge Mills with the intention of converting the vacant three-storey mill into their home. Conditions on the severance include getting a zone change to remove the mill from a hazard land designation connected to Lutteral Creek.

A study by Conestoga-Rovers & Associates shows that lowering or totally removing the dam will allow re-drawing the hazard land boundary and make the area safe for residential purposes.

Neither the County nor the Grand River Conservation Authority object to the Scott's proposal.

Addition planned

Owners of Cedar Cliff Place on Alma Street in Rockwood have received approval to amend their existing site plan to add 10 units to the building.

The existing commercial unit in the building will be moved to the front and a new section added to the west side of the building.

Council Doug Breen was concerned that the existing plan required only one parking space per unit but received assurance that had been increased to 1.5 or more.

Paintings approved

Guelph/Eramosa council approved designs to be painted on the snack booths at Rockmosa and Lloyd Dyer Park. The designs, incorporating various sports scenes, were created by students in this year's Rockwood Youth Project.

Soccer Field meeting

Guelph/Eramosa council will arrange for a public meeting later this summer to discuss construction of soccer fields at Eden Mills.

Now that the municipality has received the consultant's

The Rockwood MILLER

with MAGGIE PETRUSHEVSKY
The New Tanner



HABITAT FOR HUMANITY: Construction began Monday, July 2, on one of two semis for Habitat for Humanity in Rockwood. When the volunteers called it a day they already had frames up for the first floor of both homes and four walls in what will be finished basements in the units. - Maggie Petrushevsky photo

Council won't subsidize business in Rockwood

Guelph/Eramosa councilors won't be handing out any money for Rockwood businesses just because they pay business tax.

When Rockwood business association spokesman Tim Peloso tried to solicit

council's help by asking if they were concerned about having an economic centre in the municipality, councillors weren't buying his strategy.

"Council is not in the business of subsidizing local businesses," Mayor Dave Adsett said. "Businesses are operated by entrepreneurs wanting to make a life for themselves."

While Peloso kept begging Councillors Doug Breen and Dave Hindley to attend the group's meetings, Breen said he couldn't understand how he could help.

"It sounds like you want me and Coun. Hindley to come and assure you we'll give you some money." He wasn't going to do that.

Hindley too, would support studies on what the merchants might propose to do but was "at a loss to know why we'd be going" to their meetings.

Pleas by for action on various suggestions in a strategic plan for the area put forward at an earlier meeting with

council, coupled with statements about six businesses closing recently, plus a blatant "merchants want something for their taxes" all fell on deaf ears.

Adsett said council had already provided \$500 for flower baskets for the area and anything else will be up to the merchants.

He suggested if they wanted helpful suggestions in creating a "vibrant economic centre" the group should be talking to places like Elora and Acton where the merchants have formed a Business Improvement Area (BIA) and developed their own tourist attracting strategy.

"We could initiate a BIA tomorrow if you get your group together," he said.

When Peloso questioned whether that was the only way council could help, Adsett said the merchants need to take some responsibility for their problems because the public doesn't subsidize businesses.

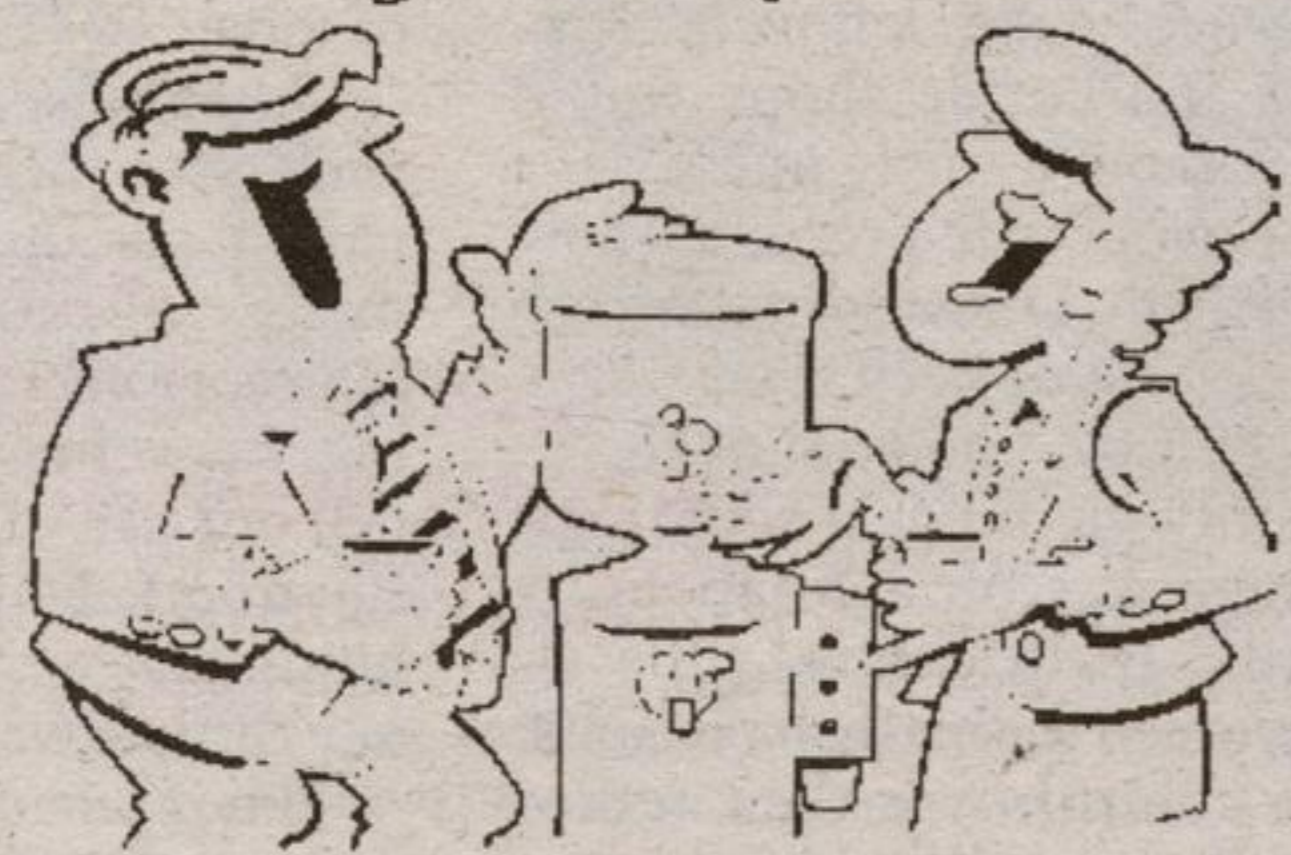
Breen said a BIA would be a mechanism to ensure 100 per cent involvement from the merchants and that would make him feel more comfortable about any project council supported for them.

Adsett also suggested Peloso should get his proposals together and make a full presentation to council instead of coming to every council meeting with another request.

In the end Hindley and Breen agreed to attend a meeting and report back to council's Aug. 7 meeting.

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