



YUMMY: Sandi's Kitchen and her preserves were one of the many vendors at the Rockwood Artisans' Craft Sale held at the Acton Arena Saturday. — Angela Tyler photo

Council not bound to act on fire hall report

By MAGGIE PETRUSHEVSKY
The New Tanner

Accepting the fire hall committee's report doesn't mean Guelph/Eramosa council is bound to act on any or all of it, one councillor says. In response to complaints by an area resident about council accepting the report before it receives any public input, Coun. Doug Breen said Bill Woychesko has a valid point. Council does need to hear from residents about its plans

for a new fire hall. However, the legal restrictions imposed on council prohibit residents learning anything about the potential sites council is considering for the new hall until such time as the site is purchased, Breen said.

He agreed with Woychesko that a new hall at Dorchester (Breen's former home town) was built on a site of less than two acres. However, the Dorchester station is essentially a satellite station, he said, and its volunteers do not perform the same jobs undertaken by the Rockwood department.

Woychesko said council should have received a report listing the essential, nice to have and frill items and the costs for each. That way it would have the information required to answer public questions about the proposed new hall. He also felt council needed to see several plans for a new hall and the cost for each. He said the public needs an explanation of how the new hall will be paid for without additional costs to the taxpayers.

Woychesko said he could not accept council's viewpoint of needing to buy land first without knowing what it will put on it. If the hall could go on a site of less than two acres the savings go into his pocket as a taxpayer, he said.

He also questioned the need for a drive-through hall and the wisdom of having bay doors on both ends of the hall

in light of the potential increased heating costs should the doors not be properly shut. Erik Stern, head of the volunteer committee examining the fire hall issue, said he still supports the committee's original suggestion of a two acre site for the hall.

"I believe, based on the input provided to and the tours taken by the fire hall committee members," he said, "a minimum two acre site... best fulfills the current and foreseeable future needs of the fire services so that they can continue to provide excellent services to the township." Stern disputed an earlier Tanner story in which Woychesko said Stern said a smaller site could be acceptable. "Either he misunderstood me or I led him astray," Stern told The New Tanner. "I continue to believe a two acre site is necessary. Anything less is inappropriate." Woychesko said he was disappointed in Stern's failure to say three weeks ago that the two acre site is necessary.

"Even tonight he hasn't said that," Woychesko said. Stern also corrected an error in the Tanner story concerning the length of time the committee worked on its report. While council did agree to set up the committee last September, the committee did not get its mandate until February, Stern said. The committee reached the conclusions for its report in seven months, not a year.

Seniors can't afford 30% tax increase

Following is a letter to Mayor David Adsett of Guelph/Eramosa, filed with the New Tanner for publication:

Dear Mr. Adsett:

We would like to take this opportunity to express our extreme frustration with the increase of close to 30% on our Tax Bill.

After analyzing the Budgets and Actuals for 1999, 2000 and the budget for 2001 we have to reach the conclusion that no serious effort has been made to cut spending, especially in areas where revenues have fallen dramatically. As an example we have noticed that Department revenues have fallen from \$446,661 (Actual 99) to \$176,106 (Budget 2001) which is a decrease of 60.6%, while at the same time expenses have increased by 12.4%. Therefore we taxpayers now have to subsidize that department by \$379,377 in 2001 while the subsidy in

1999 was \$47,480, which is an increase of 700%.

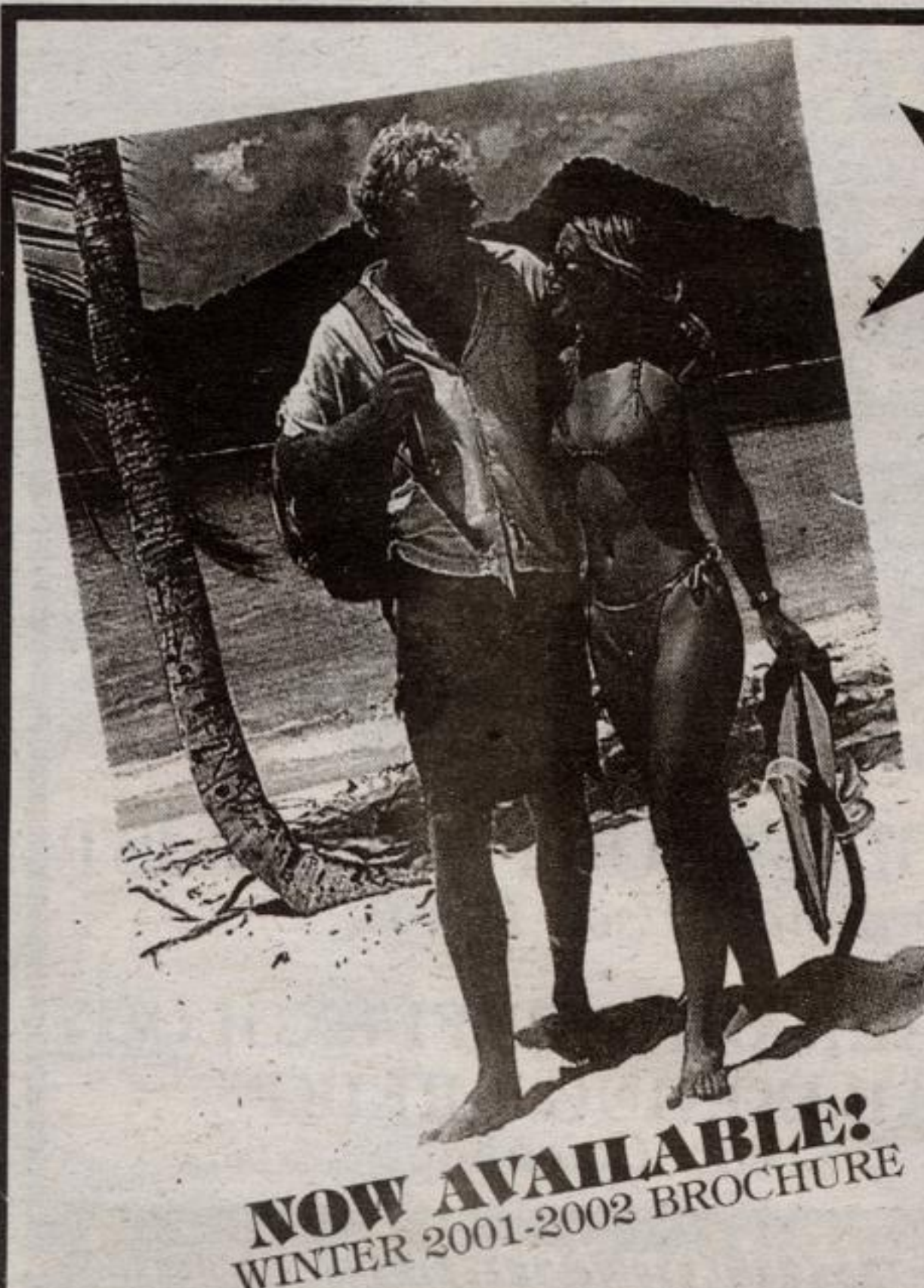
Similarly the water expenses subsidy for Rockwood is up considerably and charged to taxpayers in Everton where no water is made available.

The business-stratagem that when income goes down, expenses must be cut appropriately, does not seem to be applied by this Council. If it means shutting down some parks or services, so be it.

Also a budget draft should be made available to the public in January or February the very latest and not in mid-summer.

As senior citizens on a limited retirement pension we simply cannot afford such increases. Only part of our pension is increased by the cost of living and a similar cap should also be applied to taxes.

Yours very truly,
Klaus and Margitta Kessler



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