

# Mayor, councillor, clerk at odds over day meetings

BY MAGGIE  
PETRUSHEVSKY  
The New Tanner

Guelph/Eramosa's new mayor made his first public attempt to put a new spin on meetings Monday when he announced he was not going to deal with an agenda item concerning changing meeting times.

Mayor Clint Martin attacked clerk Janice Sheppard as "pushy" for tabling a report suggesting council might hold the first

Monday meeting of each month at 1 p.m. and the second at 7 p.m.

He told council he is "opposed to afternoon meetings," and was not prepared to deal with the item.

When Coun. Dave McCrae asked when he would debate the question, Martin said he didn't recall asking Sheppard for such a report.

McCrae and Coun. Les Foote, both veteran councillors, reminded him that the

issue had been raised at the last council meeting and members "implied" they wanted the report even if they "didn't ask for it in so many words".

McCrae pointed out that not everyone works days so council might find it had as many loyal followers among the public for afternoon meetings as it now gets for night meetings. Getting public attendance at afternoon meetings would be a matter of advertising

the new time, he suggested.

The change would allow council to cut back on the overtime paid to staff for attending night meetings. Agenda items could be streamed to deal with housekeeping items during the day meetings and leave more controversial things of public interest for the night meetings.

While Martin and Foote are both retired, new Coun. Chris White works from his home in Rockwood and

said he would be "open" to daytime meetings.

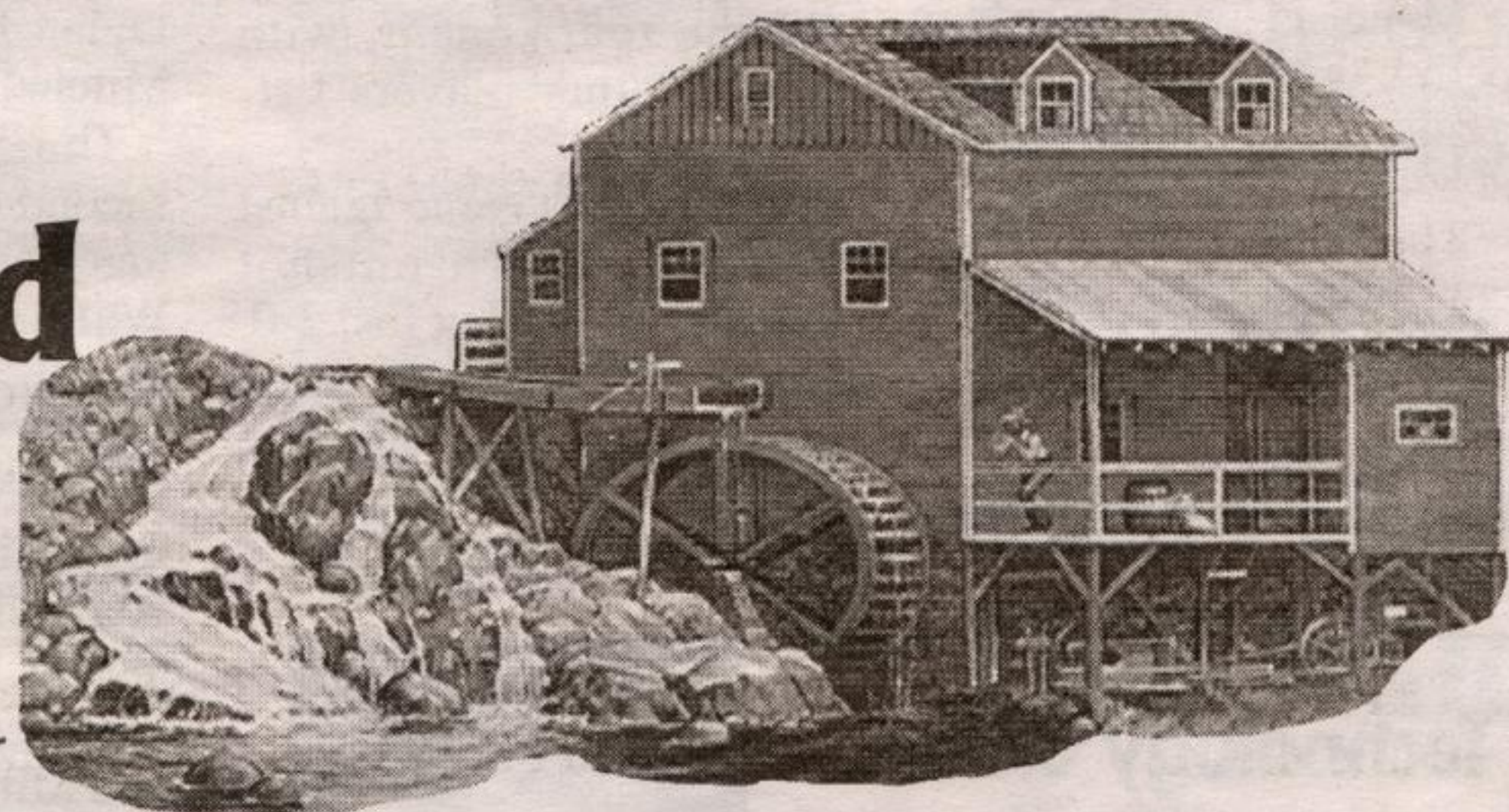
McCrae said he would prefer morning meetings if the times were changed and Sheppard said her report was "not a decision", merely a suggestion following up on council's previous discussion. If a change were to be made, it would be up to council to make it.

Coun. Teresa Gibson Smye questioned the idea of moving meetings to various locations around

the municipality, but McCrae opposed that. Sometimes questions are raised and staff need to find the answers in their files, he said. They couldn't provide those answers immediately if they were away from the office and their files were not immediately accessible.

Open Houses on issues are a different matter and he finds no fault with moving them, but not council meetings, he said.

## The Rockwood MULLER



# Mayor, councillor want keys so they can access twp. files

BY MAGGIE  
PETRUSHEVSKY  
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Two of Guelph/Eramosa's new politicians shocked their staff and fellow councillors Monday by demanding keys to the municipal office so they can access files after hours.

Coun. Teresa Gibson Smye said she needed access to a file for background information to answer questions from a resident and because she works during the day, she needs to collect the file after hours. She is a message therapist operating from a Rockwood office.

Veteran Coun. David McCrae said it "isn't council's role to be in the municipal office roaming through papers after hours."

He questioned how she would feel about giving someone access to her office in her absence and underlined staff's reluctance for the same reasons.

Holding public office gives councillors a "certain responsibility to make themselves available" even if it does inter-

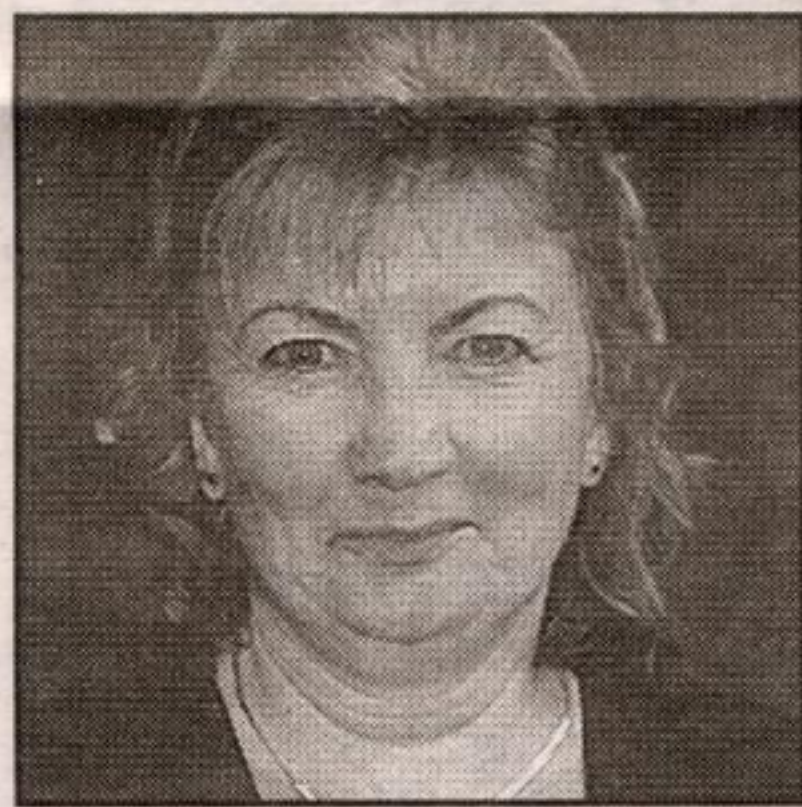


Mayor Martin

fered with their work, he said. Calling the practice of allowing councillors into files without staff being present a "slippery slope", he said he doesn't believe there's any "information in this municipality that vital it can't wait to get picked up during the day."

Gibson Smye said the Ministry of Municipal Affairs told her she has the right to have access to information at any time unless there was a contrary council policy.

Mayor Clint Martin supported Gibson Smye, saying he too has been told by the Ministry that as the head of the municipality he is entitled to access to the



Gibson Smye

municipal office at any time.

Coun. Les Foote, longtime reeve of Guelph Township and former Wellington County warden, said he was reeve for seven or eight years and "never did have a key (to that office) and never needed one."

An obviously startled clerk Janice Sheppard said no councillor had ever asked for a key before. In fact, none had wanted one. Nor do other municipalities she knows provide keys to

their councillors, she said.

Sheppard said she would be more than happy to review any file with Gibson Smye but allowing her access to files in staff's absence is dangerous.

It leaves councillors open to too many questions. If something went missing from - or was added to - the file they could be suspected of tampering with it.

"I've not met a council that wanted to put themselves at risk or be accused of doing something," she said. "I can't just pass over a file. It would be totally irresponsible of me."

Sheppard said a policy can be created and put before council for debate if they wish. As for getting information outside business hours, material can be copied from a file and delivered via the same system as that used for their agenda packages.

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## Illegal chemical dumping has council concerned

Illegal dumping of three barrels of chemicals in a Guelph/Eramosa ditch has already cost the municipality \$943 and they're still stuck with the stuff.

Public Works manager Larry Van Wyck told council three barrels of material which he suspects are components for making glues or adhesives, were found on the side of the road some time ago. Although both Wellington County and the City of Guelph operate household hazardous waste programs, no one would take the stuff for the municipality until the knew what it was.

Van Wyck had the barrels' contents sampled - with a price tag of \$943 - but still no one will take them.

"So you're saying we've spent this much just to get the samples and we still have to pay to get rid of them?" Coun. David McCrae said.

He then called on all township residents to get a

licence plate number on anyone they see dumping garbage in township ditches.

## Approve plan for insurance

Guelph/Eramosa council has approved the insurance plan laid out by its suppliers, Frank Cowan Co., for another year. The policy covers nine categories of casualty, two of property and two of automobile claims. The annual premium is \$98,216, plus taxes.

Council considered saving money by increasing the deductible on a couple of categories and insuring itself, but rejected the suggestion when members realized a single claim could easily wipe out more than would be saved by the move.

Cowan representative

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