

Halton Board looking at budget cuts

Schools may lose sports programs

By KATHY YANCHUS

Special to The Independent/Free Press

The biggest challenge facing student athletes this year may not be on the playing field, but in the boardroom of the Halton Board of Education.

At stake is \$240,000 in board funding to help finance extra-curricular sports activities such as hockey, football, swimming and track and field.

Monday night student athletes, their parents and coaches confronted Halton Board of Education finance committee members and begged them to continue supporting co-curricular athletics.

Funding for extra-curricular athletics is one of several programs which could be cut, if the finance committee instructs staff to table a budget with a 0 per cent mill rate increase.

Student athletes, backed by supportive parents, took off their distinctive school jerseys and rallied around a common cause as they spoke of the benefits of co-curricular athletic school programs.

"If nothing else, athletics teaches them to try, to succeed, to fail," commented Aldershot parent Lynne Stratton. "...students are not one-dimensional."

White Oaks Secondary (WOSS) and Iroquois Ridge High School students spoke jointly of team and school spirit, and athletics as a healthy release of tension and a confidence builder.

Any more cutbacks to the athletic program would probably mean its demise, said James Padwick, of White Oaks Secondary School. It currently costs \$90 to play football to cover such expenses as helmets and jerseys, he said, "and this is after our multiple fundraising efforts."

Others feared athletics could become an elitist activity.

"It should not become exclusive. It should not be based on wealth," said WOSS parent Mike Moore.

Athletics offer an opportunity to develop spirit and adds true value to education, said Moore.

Once the extra-curricular program is gone it "would be almost impossible to resurrect," commented Nelson High School parent Dean Watson, noting that the board's contribution of \$240,000 represents only 40 per cent of total cost. Increased school fundraising was not an option, he said.

"A healthy body creates a healthy mind," said Ina Chamberlain, a mother of two Milton E.C. Drury graduate students heavily involved in sports.

"Idle hands create idle minds," said Chamberlain. "If the sports programs are gone, self esteem is gone, school pride is taken away and you have an increase in vandalism. Students may become lethargic and their marks may slip."

A motion by board chair Diane Leblovic that the budget be returned to administration to look at cuts other than staffing and class size, lost.

"I think that's a tremendous slap in the face to the administration," said Halton Hills trustee Dick Howitt of Leblovic's motion. "I think we have to quit pushing the blame on administration and start biting the bullet."

"Until administration has something to work with, it's a waste of their time (to return the 'reduction report') until we've told them what mill rate we want," commented Burlington trustee Linda Glover.

"The mill rate is a red herring. Taxes go up because of the downloading of money from the province," said Halton Hills trustee Dave Whiting.

The next meeting of the finance committee will be March 27 beginning at 6 p.m. with the budget expected to be passed that same week at the regular board meeting, March 30.

Drivers charged with impaired

Three Georgetown men were charged with impaired driving recently and two of them were arrested because other drivers called police.

The first was seen by a motorist at 8:30 p.m. Monday in a 1992 Voyager van driving on Hwy. 7 and Winston Churchill Rd. The motorist told police the vehicle pulled into a Webster Way driveway and police arrived and arrested a man. He was

charged with impaired driving, refusing a breathalyzer test and driving while prohibited. He was held for a bail hearing.

At midnight Monday police spotted a 1982 Buick on Mountainview. They stopped the car administered a breathalyzer test and charged a Tenth Line resident with impaired driving, having over the legal limit of alcohol in his blood and breach of probation. He will be

in court on April 3.

On Tuesday afternoon a citizen advised police of a someone driving a 1995 Cadillac on Delrex Blvd. near Chelvin Dr.

Police arrived, stopped the vehicle and charged a man with impaired driving and having over the legal limit of alcohol in his blood.

He is scheduled to appear in court on April 24 in Milton.

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