

Halton Hills town budget

Councillors seek zero increase

By **LISA TALLYN**
Staff writer

Budget committee members made a few cuts to the town's 1995 operating budget Wednesday night in an attempt to slice away enough to ensure taxpayers will not face an increase on their tax bills.

By the end of the night they were within about \$20,000 of their target, and have set aside next Thursday evening to continue working through the \$18.8 million operating budget.

Town treasurer Andy Koopmans presented the budget to committee members originally calling for a slight increase on the average taxpayers town portion of the tax bill. According to the budget the average urban taxpayer would have faced about a \$2.85 annual increase and rural taxpayers would have paid an extra \$3.42 this year over last. The difference between urban and rural rates is due to the fact there was a slight decrease in the urban service charges which only urban residents pay.

Based on council's previous direction of no tax increase Koopmans suggested three cuts worth about \$70,000 that would result in the zero increase; eliminating a new bylaw enforcement officer, new bylaw enforcement secretary, and a part-time computer programmer in the finance department.

Councillors decided they didn't want to cut the bylaw enforcement officer because there is a critical need for a new officer.

Councillor Norm Elliott said while councillors may look like heroes for not raising taxes "we are not going to be heroes to those people who complain to bylaw enforcement."

Councillor Gerald Rennie questioned whether council was shooting for zero because it would



NORM ELLIOTT



RON CHATTEN

be psychologically better to provide voters with no increase when in reality it would only cost taxpayers a couple of dollars a year to add the three positions.

In the end committee members voted in favor of a zero increase.

To reach their goal members did cut the part-time programmer and the bylaw enforcement secretary. The bylaw enforcement officer position, at a cost of about \$41,000 was kept in the budget but the employee's start date was pushed back to Sept. 1 instead of April 1 resulting in about a \$20,000 saving.

That position may not receive final approval, however, as Councillor Rob Heaton was out of

the room when the vote was taken. The vote, which was tied at 6-6, resulted in the position remaining in the budget, but Heaton indicated when the budget comes to council he will not support the inclusion of the position.

Despite an attempt by Councillor Ron Chatten to eliminate the fire department's budget request for a full-time fire prevention officer/firefighter the item was approved.

Fire Chief Bill Cunningham stressed to councillors the need for the new person saying council "is obligated to look at public safety."

"The reality is we are working our part-time firefighters to death," said Cunningham. "We have to fix that situation before the wheels fall off." He added one day last month the fire department called out it's part-time firefighters four times and it wasn't reasonable to expect town employers to allow their employees that amount of time off.

Chatten's motion to delete the position was lost.

Other changes made to the budget include a \$500 cut from council's public relations budget of \$2,500, the inclusion of a contract programmer in the finance department instead of a full-time staff member resulting in about \$2,700 in savings, a \$1,500 addition for a crossing guard if required at Mountainview Rd. and Argyll Rd. or Mountainview Rd. and Barber Dr., and a \$15,000 addition to the capital budget to do engineering work on the Fourth Line from 10 to 17 Sideroad. The actual road work will be put in the capital forecast for 1996 and 1997.

Committee also approved a \$5,000 grant for the Acton Citizen's Band and decided a report on Fifth Line improvements wasn't necessary now as it is considered less of a priority than the Fourth Line.

The budget meeting will be 5:30 p.m. Thursday at the Civic Centre.

Lions taken
Two concrete lions weighing about 100 lbs. each were taken from pedestals at a Lewis St. residence Wednesday morning. There are no suspects in the incident, police said. Some items appeared at a Cleaveholm Dr. residence sometime before 7 a.m. that day.

Police
Blotter
These include a used bath tub, four construction cones, a wooden porch swing and a concrete coachman lawn ornament, police said.

CORRECTION NOTICE
We wish to draw your attention to the error in our "SPRING FIX-UP SALE" flyer.
Page 9: Item #4, 2 Piece Toilet 63-5202X is not by American Standard, nor is it made in Canada.
We wish to draw your attention to the errors in our "CURRENT 1995 ANNUAL CATALOGUE"
Aluminum Stepladder. Illustration #7 on page 30 and illustration #5 on page 31 should be transposed.
Page 259: Zinc 200 lb. Trailer Hitch Ball 40-6557-4. Catalogue should read: 9.99, not 7.99
Zinc 3500 lb. Trailer Hitch Ball 40-6559-0. Catalogue should read: 10.99, not 8.99.
Canadian Tire regrets any inconvenience these errors may have caused our valued customers.

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