

Sign bylaw slightly altered to appease business owners

At the last council meeting before the municipal election, Halton Hills council changed a part of the controversial sign bylaw to appease the small business community.



JOAN ROBSON

The majority of council voted Monday to change the permit system for portable signs from three 30-day permits per year to four 60-day permits per year. This is a trial basis only— after which it will be evaluated. The report still needs to be officially approved at the last council meeting of the term— Nov. 24.

The move will cost the town extra money in adding staff hours to process the permits. Based on a full-year that cost is \$12,600.

"I'm usually one of the cheaper councillors around this table, but it just seems like a small amount to keep our businesses happy," said Ward 4 Councillor Bob Inglis.

While the staff report had implemented some of the committee's recommendations, it did not support the four-a-year permit system due to the additional cost, Debbie Edmonds, municipal law enforcement officer told council.

"Do people really need a portable sign eight months of the year when those who truly do need it are getting it 12 months of the year?" asked Edmonds, pointing out a staff clause that would allow businesses whose landlords do not permit permanent signs to have portable ones for a limited time until a 2005 review.

Instead, staff tried for a compromise: three 42-day permits, but members of the Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce sign bylaw committee, Herma Buchanan and Mark Poullos, returned to council to argue against it. They said it was insufficient— particularly since rentals are based on 30-day periods.

"What is this whole exercise for," asked Poullos, co-owner of Outdoor Power Equipment, "wringing more money out of the local business? ... I implore you, listen to what Halton Hills businesses are telling you that they need to be successful to remain in Halton Hills."

Buchanan, co-owner of Vision Travel,

said the staff recommendation would force her to lay off staff and to deny local charities the opportunity to use her portable sign free of charge. Buchanan said she has been trying to get a permanent sign approved by the town, but although her plans were rejected, she said she has been waiting for five days to get an answer to 'why?'

Poullos said the impetus behind the sign bylaw was improving safety, yet recently he said a sign that had blown off its stakes hit Buchanan in the back. He then pulled a Ron Chatten election sign from a bag. Poullos said he had counted 58 Chatten signs from Hall Rd. to Sinclair Ave.

"I think we should ensure that all signs are treated equally," he said. "There is a general feeling among local businesses that the current push to eliminate mobile signs from local business advertising has more to do with short-term appearance for Communities in Bloom judges than in the safety in our citizens."

Chatten, a Ward 4 candidate, who is a strong proponent of removing excessive portable signs for safety, rebutted that elections signs are covered under the town's bylaw and that he has followed the rules.

"It's unfair to mix the two issues," he said.

Ward 2 Councillor Joan Robson had attempted to put a deferral on the table to refer the matter to budget committee when other staff additions are discussed. But when she agreed to wait for more discussion on the issue, Ward 3 Councillor Moya Johnson jumped in later with her motion to try the four-season permit system until the end of June.

Regional Councillor Rick Bonnette's additional amendment to change that to August to ensure at least three of the four seasons were experienced was rejected by the majority of council.

Ward 3 Councillor Jane Fogal asked if staff talked about upping fees from the current \$95. Acting CAO Bob Austin said, "No, I don't think it's the appropriate way to go."

Fogal replied, "I disagree with that."
—By Cynthia Gamble, staff writer

Man charged after officers challenged to fight

A Brampton man is facing charges after Halton Police responded to the parking lot at Nashville North early Friday.

Police say when they arrived a man, who had been involved in a fight, challenged the officers to fight. The man was then kicked out the window of a police cruiser en route to the police station.

When the man was released from the Milton police station the next morning he

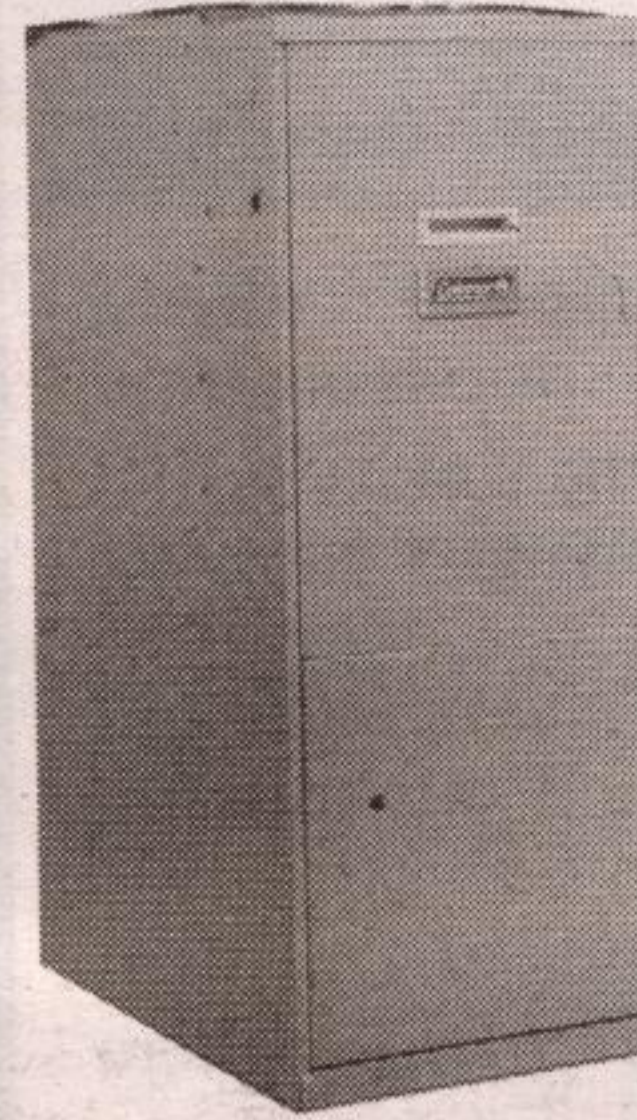
began yelling and swearing outside of the station.

Charged with mischief and two counts of cause a disturbance is Joel Amaral, 24, of Fleming Ave.

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An undisclosed quantity of cigarettes, phone cards and gum were taken from the concession stand at Georgetown GO station sometime early Sunday, October 26. Entry was gained through a smashed window.

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