

Community groups greet residents

More than 50 groups and agencies showcased their organizations at the annual Community Open House held in the Georgetown Market Place on the weekend.

Photos by Yves Desjardins



Debbie Smart of Wastewise on Armstrong Ave. shows the advantages of re-use.



Liz Hardstaff (left) and Janet Foster of Halton Hills Community Support and Information serve residents from babies to seniors in both Acton and Georgetown. The Acton office is on Mill St. and the Georgetown office is on Armstrong Ave.



Mary Walsma and Fern Jory of the Acton Seniors Centre were eager to talk about the many activities available as a centre member, including wine-making.



At age 14, Mackenzie Smith is a 11-year veteran of the Halton School of Dance and was eager to tell her experiences at the school, assisted by staff member Linda Brennan.

New era of streamlined procedures and less red tape to begin at Town

Enthusiasm echoed around the council chamber recently when Halton Hills council approved a report that would see streamlining of the development approval process.

"Bravo! I love it! This is possibly the best report I've read in the eight years I've been on council," said Ward 4 Councillor Bob Inglis. "There's common sense, lots of good recommendations— I don't foresee any big problems. I don't think I can say enough good (things) about it."

The new level of service is required as high-priced development begins in the 401-407 Gateway Business Park (401 Corridor). This Corridor is expected to become the town's breadwinner in the next few years helping to alter Halton Hills, traditional low ratio of industrial/commercial assessment versus residential assessment (14:86). Increased industrial assessment would allow council to begin spending money on items residents have been demanding for years: road repair, parks, arenas, libraries, expanded services, etc.

The report, *Process Review of Development Systems*— the last by outgoing Chief Administrative Officer Bob Austin— names 38 recommendations to improve the town's customer service including creating a new

homeowner customer service representative, processing timelines and staff roles. Led by a staff steering committee, chaired by Finance Director Ed DeSousa and Recreation and Parks Director Terry Alyman, and a consultant, all planning procedures received a close examination over the last six months.

Of the 38 recommendations:
 • Two related to whom on the town staff should play the lead role on applications. Each application would be led by a single staff person to ensure consistency and timely reporting.

"Someone always keeping the eye on the ball," said the consultant, Maureen McCauley of McCauley Nichols.

• 17 are designed to improve clarity on business procedures, including a mandatory pre-consultation meeting with developers

• Six improve customer service such as one day acknowledgement of voice-mail or e-mail messages

• Eight deal with corporate support (council) for development processing, and,

• Five involve the implementation strategies for these recommendations— to make sure the report doesn't gather dust on a shelf.

It is expected that the vast majority of the recommendations could be achieved with a year.

"This is one of the most important reports that council has approved this term," said Mayor Rick Bonnette. "We now know what we have to do to make Halton Hills a desirable place to do business."

For example, the report is recommending that approvals for minor applications be accomplished in 30-44 business days and 51-62 days for major applications. The current average is seven and half months— and minor or major is not distinguished.

He congratulated Austin for recognizing that the old way of doing things would not work or be efficient in this new development environment.

Bonnette said the streamlining will help cut through the red tape that this

Town has been known for. It will also aid "the little guy who just wants to expand his business— and it's the small businesses that are the backbone of any good community," the mayor said.

Councillor Jane Fogal said one developer has told her there already seems to be a "changed attitude in the building (Civic Centre)." and now developers perceive they are being helped instead of hindered.

Councillor Mike Davis was concerned by items that don't sit the "right way" with him and warned there is "devil in the details". The Ward 3 councillor added he did not share the belief that increased assessment generated will be beneficial to the town. He said with increased assessment there is increased liability and "in my view, it's a wash. We don't gain anything by having more assessment or more development."

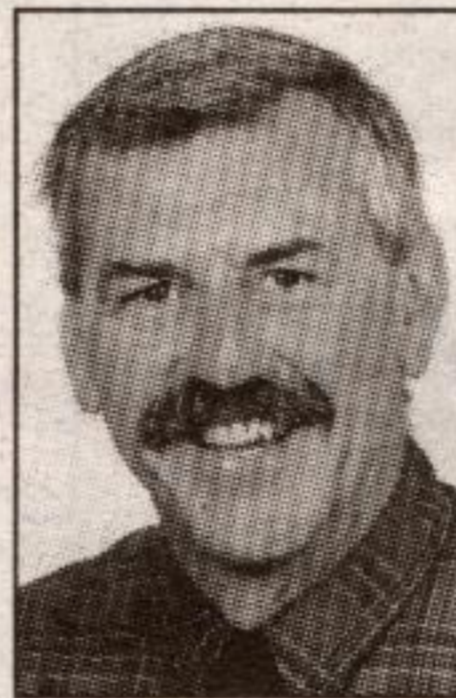
However, he agreed to support the report because specific items must still come back to council for future approval.

The report was supported unanimously. Copies of the report, plus future updates on the new processes, will be sent to the development industry, businesses and related agencies. The 97-page report can be viewed on the Town's website, www.haltonhills.ca.

—By Cynthia Gamble, staff writer


'Bravo! I love it! This is possibly the best report I've read in the eight years I've been on council.'

—Ward 4 Councillor Bob Inglis



ZOOM TOOTH WHITENING SYSTEM

Shade changes of 6 to 10 shades in about an hour

 your smile says so much.

Cosmetic Dentistry

22 Guelph Street
downtowngeorgetowndental.com

(905) 877-4371

