

Town caves to retailer pressure

Change made to business licensing bylaw

After receiving a loud and clear message from area retailers last month that they were opposed to being charged an annual licence fee, a Town committee has decided to make the fee one-time only.

The Town's Business Licence Review Committee supported a motion by Halton Hills Mayor Rick Bonnette to make the change to the retail trade section of its business licence bylaw at a meeting Monday afternoon.

A one-time \$90 fee would be applied only to retail (merchandise) establishments— not stores that sell food, tobacco, or second-hand goods which will continue to be charged an annual fee— and is to take effect on April 1. Halton Hills council has to support the change by endorsing the committee's meeting minutes before the revised bylaw is official. The minutes are expected to be included in Monday's (Feb. 6) council agenda.

The revision is to be made to the business licensing bylaw passed by council last June that for the first time in the Town's history saw retail businesses being charged an annual fee

ranging from \$82.50 to \$220.

Georgetown Market Place manager Herminia Henderson, who spoke out against the annual fee to the committee last month, was pleased with the result of the meeting.

"I didn't want to see any fee, but if

satisfied with the outcome.

"I still feel it's (a fee for retailers) wrong," said Viera. "But it's the best of two evils."

"I don't think it's necessary to have a licence every year," said Bonnette when making the motion.

"However, it is important that every retail store at least have a fire plan."

He said for the one-time fee, businesses will be registered with the Town and receive a fire plan. Any retailer who paid the fee in 2005 does not to have to pay it again, the Mayor confirmed.

"I think the last meeting opened a lot of eyes," said Bonnette, who recommended a letter be sent to retailers explaining the change to the bylaw.

Debbie Edmonds, manager of licensing and legislative services for the Town, said the impact on the Town's 2006 budget by removing the annual fee for the general retailers is \$10,800.

Also at the meeting Monday the committee added a \$90 one year fee for indoor mall vendors and one year \$180 fee for indoor mall trade shows.

—By Lisa Tallyn, staff writer



'...if there had to be a fee, a one-time fee is good. That way the merchants don't get hassled...'

—Herminia Henderson
Georgetown Market Place manager

there had to be a fee, a one-time fee is good," said Henderson. "That way the merchants don't get hassled, it's a done deal. I think most retailers would be pretty pleased."

She also said she wanted to compliment the mayor, and some councillors for their support and efforts on behalf of the retailers on the issue.

John Viera of JV Clothing, who at the earlier meeting with the committee called the fee a "money grab" and presented a petition signed by more than 300 local retailers opposed to the licence fee, was not completely

Development doesn't pay for development: Treasurer

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Assessment growth in 2005 was set at 4.25 per cent, generating close to \$900,000 in cash for the Town. But it was not enough.

"It's always been a bugaboo with me that development charges do not pay their way," said Councillor Bob Inglis. "As we develop there are more services demanded by our residents...the only way I can see to bring taxes (increases) down to zero is by reducing services ... I think



ED DESOUSA

known fact that a single family home on a forty-foot lot, the annual

we're between a rock and a hard place."

"It's a known fact in the municipal world that development does not pay for development," agreed DeSousa. "It's also a

taxes does not cover the cost of services demanded by residents (of a municipality). That's why you need a strong commercial/industrial base or high density building."

DeSousa also noted that assessment growth does not cover even all the base budget costs.

Operating budget projections for 2007 and 2008 is already set at a 5-6 per cent increase.

—By Cynthia Gamble, staff writer

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