

# Town sets new mark for building activity

**CYNTHIA GAMBLE**  
Staff Writer

The Town of Hills achieved a record in building construction activities in 2005, issuing 1,382 building permits, representing a construction value of \$183 million.

In 2004—the previous record-breaking year—the Town issued 1,262 permits with a construction value of \$148 million.

The Building Zoning and Enforcement (BZE) Department collected \$2.3 million in building permit fees in 2005—almost half a million dollars more than the previous year.

This year, 2006, BZE has budgeted for \$1.7 million in building permit fee revenues.

BZE director Henry Tse said he didn't expect this year to match the historical numbers posted by 2005, because housing starts were slowing down, but the amount of commercial building, particularly in the 401-407 Gateway Business Park, will likely keep help the numbers to keep pace.

"In the general sense we won't be able to match 2005," said Tse, "but it's not a concern because the revenue will be there on the commercial side."

Mayor Rick Bonnette agrees with that assessment.

"There's enquiries almost every other day about the 401 Corridor and we're going to see more industrial growth coming to our town," said the mayor in an interview. He noted some of the "big players" in 2005 such as Fernbrook's bottling plant, Real Canadian Superstore, Price Chopper, and added "that's a sign that people want to invest in our community."



New home construction in Georgetown South helped the Town set a new record for building permits in 2005.  
*Photo by Ted Brown*

In 2005, permits were issued for 786 new homes, including 565 new single detached homes, 23 semi-detached or duplexes and 198 townhouses.

This alone represented a construction value of \$145 million and \$1.8 million in permit fees for the Town.

In addition, BZE also issued building permits for five industrial buildings including the first building permit for a major industrial project in the 401-407

Gateway Business Park. Another 10 permits were issued for additions or alterations to existing industrial buildings. Total construction value: \$11 million and total building permit fees, \$142,000.

Commercial development was active too in 2005. Three new buildings were built with another 29 receiving additions or alterations. Construction value has been set at \$17 million with \$270,000 in permit fees generated for the Town.

"Almost 16-17 per cent of the 2005 numbers are industrial/commercial and that's a good positive trend," said Bonnette, noting it will help to ease the residential tax burden; commercial/industrial sector's tax share now sits at about 12 per cent.

However under the new Bill 124 (Building Code Statute Law Amendment Act) legislation, 2005 was the last year that building fee revenues could be used a revenue-generator for town-wide projects. Starting this year, all revenue over and beyond what was budgeted will go into a reserve fund to be used as a "rainy day" fund in future years when BZE doesn't meet its projected revenue.

*(Cynthia Gamble can be reached at cgamble@independentfreepress.com)*



## A Major message

One of the two world's first female CF18 fighter pilot, Maj. Dee Brasseur (Ret'd), spoke to students at Centennial Middle School last week as she described the challenges of being trained as the first female fighter pilot in the 1980s. Maj. Brasseur told her story as a means of giving the students a message that achieving goals is limited only by one's desire to work for it.

*Photo by Ted Brown*

## Councillors spar over trucking lobby accusation

**CYNTHIA GAMBLE**  
Staff Writer

Startled by the suggestion she might be part of a trucking lobby, Councillor Joan Robson demanded an explanation and got one—of sorts—Tuesday night from Councillor Mike Davis, who had made the comment at a January council meeting.

In the Feb. 15 edition of *The Independent and Free Press* it was reported Davis accused rural councillors Robson, Bryan Lewis and Clark Somerville of being part of a trucking lobbying during a debate on posting half-load limits on rural roads at the January 23 council meeting.

However, Robson did not hear Davis make the comment that evening and became aware of it upon reading the story. Before demanding answers from Davis, she called to confirm with the paper that the comment was made.

"I am quite startled that a fellow councillor would say this," said Robson at the Feb. 20 council meeting, pointing out that she and her colleagues have been working hard to serve their constituents such as getting an aggregate company to reduce tonnage to lessen the wear and tear on roads, and stopping the rerouting of trucks through the village of Glen Williams. I can assure the public, and council here, that I was never approached by any of them (trucking companies) and I have never approached any of them."

She demanded a clarification from Davis, who said he didn't recollect making the comment and hadn't read the article, but added he would make a statement at the March 7 meeting.

Tuesday night, he read his statement to councillors, in part saying, "My comments were made in open council and interpreted by the reporter."

During the January meeting, after Robson, Somerville and Lewis had spoken against the half-load limits proposed by Davis, Davis countered saying, "What I see here is a little bit of a trucking lobby going

on; we want to be fully loaded. My side of it, is taxpayers paying for that ... fully loaded on roads that perhaps can't support it and doing damage to the roads."

While the implication was clear he had been referring to the previous speakers, Davis said in his Tuesday night statement, "I did not intend them to be specifically directed at Councillor Robson, Somerville or Lewis."

But as he continued to read his statement, Davis compounded the issue by painting the whole council with a similar brush.

"It's easy to see support for the trucking industry when council shows no concern for possible damage by fully-loaded trucks using roads during unusually warm temperatures recorded throughout January."

However Lewis and Councillor Jon Hurst took issue with the words "shows no concern."

"I think we had a long debate about this at the time (January)," said Hurst. "We, as a council, don't like to micro-manage our departments. We have a public works department that's been looking after roads for 30 years. They know how to do it and they know what they're doing, and we leave that sort of decision in their capable hands. To say council shows no concern, there could be nothing further from the truth."

"I would have a lot more respect for you Councillor (Davis) if you spent a little more time in raising Ward 3 issues instead of trying to pick apart the other councillors' efforts," Robson told Davis.

Davis restated his contention that posting half-load limits on rural roads is a town-wide issue.

"My concern, which I brought forward in good faith, is for the town budget. If there is such a structural damage due to thawing and from fully-loaded trucks, we could have mitigated unnecessary costs with half-load limits," he said.

*(Cynthia Gamble can be reached at cgamble@independentfreepress.com)  
Ed. Note: The Independent & Free Press stands by its Feb. 15 story.*

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