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# Councillors stick to budget plan to hire four full-time firefighters

Continued from pg. 4

year representing a 1.3 per cent increase on taxes— subject to annual review.

“Right now we have a part-time complement (of 90 firefighters) that are supported by a full-time staff (20) during the day,” explained Acting Fire Chief John Martin. “After hours we have no guarantees that staff will be available. What we propose... is a progressive plan to provide full-time staffing on a 24-7 basis over the next 20 to 25 years.”

“I have to go with the fire master plan,” said Ward 3 Councillor Dave Kentner. “We’re raising a generation of people who are not as quick to volunteer ...and so I think we are going to need that full-time complement and this is the only way we can reasonably do it, otherwise we’re going to be looking at a million dollar increase if we have to hire all at once.”

Bonnette pointed to a recent Town survey that showed that fire services were a top priority by residents.

Duncan’s motion lost with only Councillors Clark Somerville, Joan Robson and Mike O’Leary supporting him. Opposed were Bonnette and Councillors Jane Fogal, Jon Hurst, Inglis, Johnson and Kentner. Councillor Bryan Lewis who originally seconded Duncan’s motion, declared a conflict in the midst of debate— his brother is a firefighter.

Finally, Councillor Mike O’Leary questioned whether the Town could use the \$150,000 savings in the 2006 winter control budget due to the mild weather as a tax credit on 2007 tax bills.

“This is a unique situation... and people are

expecting some savings out of the snow plowing budget,” he said.

But DeSousa explained in doing so, it would be reducing the ongoing base budget for future years by \$150,000 and the council would have to make up the difference through a future tax hike.

No action was taken on O’Leary’s suggestion.

The winter control savings will also go into the surplus, which is projected to be very small this year— less than \$175,000 (excluding the \$325,000 that will be used to top up the reserves, which finances the capital works program and equipment/facility repairs and purchases).

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



**DAVE KENTNER**

## Town staffers get 3% pay hike

Changes to a personnel policy manual revealed that Town of Halton Hills non-union staff would be receiving a 3 per cent wage increase in 2007.

The changes to the salary grid have been allowed for in the proposed 2007 operating budget. Council will formally approve the operating budget at the Feb. 5 meeting. The pay increase will be retroactive to January 1, 2007.

The Summer Program Leader, the Summer Supervisor and the Summer Co-ordinator— all part-time employees— will also get the 3 per cent increase.

Another change in the manual was an increase in the gas mileage repayment from 47 cents per kilometre to 48 cents. This will cost an estimated \$3,400— already included in the 2007 budget.

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