

MSB Land sale on hold until 'facts' in report

By Frances Niblock

The proposed sale of surplus property at the McKenzie Smith Bennett School site is on hold until Halton District School Board staff prepares a full report to gather "the facts" of the situation.

When the Board voted in January to list a portion of the school site as surplus and sell it, the move set off a firestorm of protest that included a Town press conference and several public protests denouncing the move.

At the Board's meeting last week, Halton Hills Wards One and Two Trustee Gerry Ockenden, who initially supported selling the land – received support for his motion that the surplus land MSB not be listed for sale or sold until the staff report is ready at the end of May.

Ockenden said there was no dissent or debate at the Board table, but he'd had discussion with his fellow

trustees before the vote to explain his position in wanting to come to a solution beneficial to both the Board and the Town.

Ministry's boss

Alluding to provincial orders to sell all surplus land to be able to receive funding from the Ministry of Education for new schools, Ockenden said they still have to do what the Ministry wants them to do.

He said he told his fellow trustees before the meeting that it was difficult for him to meet with Mayor Rick Bonnette to try to reach a solution when it was unclear what exactly they were talking about.

"There was really nothing to talk about because neither of us knew how much land we were talking about or exactly where they were talking about slicing it off if it happens, and there's no value on the property – we can't even figure out if we're

talking in today's real estate dollars," Ockenden said on Monday.

Asked how he could have voted several months ago to list the property as surplus so it could be sold without the information, Ockenden replied: "That's a good question. Hindsight is a wonderful thing. At the time it just seemed like the right thing to do. I don't know what to tell you. I want this thing to move forward so I'm really not wanting to say anything that will jeopardize that," he said, adding that he probably should have asked some questions when the initial vote took place.

"Whether it was my inexperience at the time, I don't know. I guess it's a learning experience in some regards," Ockenden said adding that staff report he asked for will include the actual acreage for sale, the actual footprint of the acreage for sale and the current market value of the

acreage for sale.

Three acres

In 2000, when the Board indentified a parcel of land at MSB as surplus, they were considering a three-acre parcel. Trustees voted against disposing of that property, led by then Acton Trustees and Board Chair, the late Ethel Gardiner. At the time, the Board did not provide any direction as to what should happen to the school lands beyond the decision not to sell any of the 15.4-acre MSB site.

Ockenden said none of the other seven properties deemed surplus by the Board in January are affected by this motion. He said he asked for the report on MSB so everyone is "aware of the facts of the situation, rather than making assumptions."

Acton Councillor Jon Hurst believes that trustees were initially "blindsided" by staff when the issue of selling surplus land at MSB made it to the Board table.

"If our staff had done that to us I would be very disappointed. I think a certain individual thought he could slide this through – that's what I think and it's just an assumption.

He was there and knows the history of nine years and why he wouldn't include that history in a report – with it being in camera, who knows what

was said," Hurst said.

Ockenden was not on the Board nine years ago and has said he did not recall debate over the issue in 2000.

**Scouts, Guides, Calvinist Cadets
Annual Food Drive
On behalf of Acton Foodshare
Date: Saturday, April 4, 2009**

Please place your non-perishable food donations in plastic bags at your front door by 8:30 am on April 4. Donations such as the following would be appreciated:

Canned Meat, Fish, Fruit, Stew, Vegetables, Tomatoes, Pasta Sauce, Peanut Butter, Jam, Ketchup, Rice, Mac. & Cheese, Cereal, Side dishes (Sidekicks, Instant Potatoes, Stuffing) Snacks suitable for school children.

We presently have a good supply of soup, baby food, canned pasta, baked beans, chickpeas and kidney beans.

Thank you for your donation

If your donation is not picked up please call the Foodshare

519-853-0457

Leave a message

POLICE BEAT

On Saturday March 28 at 2.49am, and Acton resident was arrested by Halton Regional Police following a single vehicle motor accident in which the south west traffic light post on Main Street at Mill Street was hit. Further damage was done to property adjacent to the traffic post.

Charged with impaired having a blood alcohol of over 8mg and possession of a controlled substance is Clifford James Carr of Main Street South.

\$20,000 reward

Halton Regional Police Services Board has approved a one year extension of the existing twenty thousand dollars (\$20,000) reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the person(s) responsible for the murder of 55 year-old Raymond Venerus of Milton.

On the morning of Wednesday, Feb 21, 2007, Ray Venerus was shot and killed a short distance from his residence on Dublin Line in the Town of Milton. A passerby located the victim lying on the roadway next to his Jeep Cherokee. An autopsy revealed that the cause of death was a gunshot wound to the head.

Anonymous information will not qualify for any portion of this reward. Claims for the reward will only be recognized when made in writing prior to March 31 2010. The reward will be

payable in Canadian funds and will be shared proportionally amongst person(s) supplying information at the conclusion of he trial and any appeals.

Anyone with information regarding this investigation is asked to contact Halton Regional Police Service. VENERUS Homicide Tip Line at 905-825-4747 Ext 5140 or toll free at 1-866-442-5866 Ext 5140. You can also send information to Sergeant Roger Wilkie via email at roger.wlkie@hrps.on.ca

Shot by air rifle

A 13 year-old riding a



Ray Venerus

bicycle along Duby Road, on March 23 at 7:40 pm was approached by two men in a pick-up truck and the youth was hit four times by an air rifle, causing minor injuries.

The men are described as white, between 18 and 20 years old and the pick up is black and possibly and import.

Persons with information are asked to call Halton Regional Police 11 Division at 905-878-5511 or Crimestoppers.

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Sunday April 5th 12pm - 3pm

(old building, corner of Willow and Church)

Ribbon cutting with Mayor Rick Bonnette

Meet Our Staff, Tour New Facility and

Enjoy Food and Drink

Kasia Sitarz RMT, PTS

Christian Monti - soon to be RMT, joining us in July 2009

For more information please call

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