

Library budget increased by \$422,000

River Street entrance approved - Plaza and reading deck on hold

By Frances Niblock

Town Council approved a \$4,142,000 budget for the new Acton library that includes an extra \$353,000 to cover "significant and unexpected costs related to the site," and \$64,000 for an entrance facing River Street. The items will be funded through the Special Infrastructure Levy Reserve.

Plans for a \$328,000 plaza and a \$30,000 reading deck were deleted from the proposal, but Council approved spending \$5,000 to study if there is any community interest in fundraising for those items.

Several library boosters urged Council not to make any cuts to the proposed plans, including Acton's Sydney Weaver, an ambassador for We Care (an Easter Seals Organization), who said it made her "sad" to read that some of the proposed library plans might not be built.

From her wheelchair at the podium, Weaver, 9, said she'd been looking forward to an accessible library. She said it made

her "sad" to hear that some of the "wonderful" plans might not be built because of the budget.

"It is important for me to go to the library and get books and enjoy the programs that are offered, like every other kid. With the new library, it will give me the independence I should (have.) But not just me, anyone that is facing challenges," Weaver said adding seniors with walkers and mothers with strollers will also be able to get into the new facility.

"Haven't we waited long enough to make the Acton library more accessible to those that face challenges?" Weaver said.

Former Acton Councillor Norm Elliott, a library board member and a member of the Friends of the Library group who said he was speaking as a private citizen, urged Council not to "kick" the proposed \$328,000 plaza out of the budget because it is important to the integrity of the project.

He said it was unlikely that there would be a lot of support for fundraising

to pay for the plaza, proposed to be built on the site of the existing library building. He said it would "most assuredly" cost more to build the plaza sometime in the future.

"I know the problems you've got with capital budgets... but in view of the extra costs. I think it is something that is manageable," Elliott said.

Speaking in favour of the additional \$353,000 for retaining walls and to meet accessibility standards, \$64,000 for the River Street entrance and \$328,000 for the plaza, Acton Councillor Jon Hurst said they are "compelled to support" the projects.

Hurst said people expect to be able to park on River Street and use the bridge to get to the traditional entrance to the library to avoid the traffic congestion, and almost chaos, he predicts on School Lane if there was just one entrance at the "back" of the building.

"Do we want to save a bit of money now so we can spend more later?" Hurst asked.

Mayor Rick Bonnette said while he supported the River Street entrance, he was "betwixt and between" when it came to the proposed additional money for the plaza and reading deck.

"The bottom line is that this is a good news story - Acton will not be short-changed," Bonnette said, noting that without the Federal and Provincial funding that will cover almost two-thirds of the cost, the new Acton library might not have been built for another four or five years.



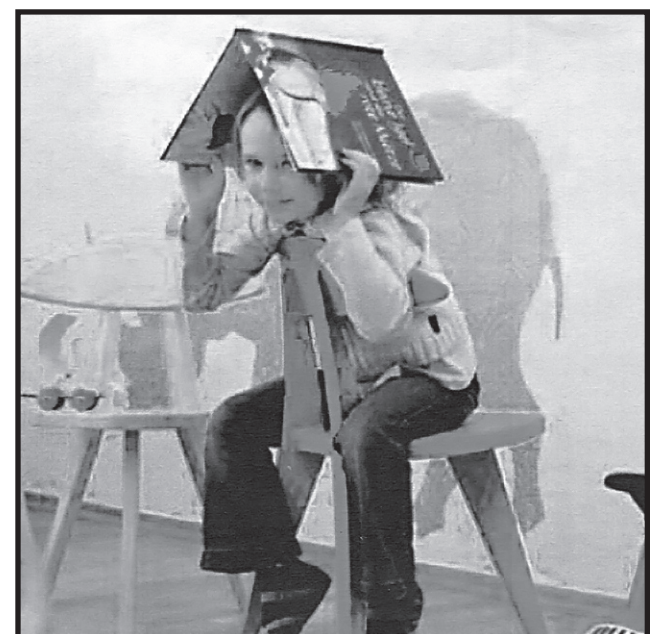
LIBRARY BOOSTER: Acton's Sydney Weaver, 9, an ambassador for the We care Easter Seals Foundation, appealed to Halton Hills Council on Monday night to approve funding for the new Acton library - a facility that will be accessible to anyone with a handicap, seniors using walkers and moms with strollers. - Frances Niblock photo

Acton Councillor Mike O'Leary said it was very important to retain the River Street entrance, but he had "real difficulties" supporting the \$328,000 for the plaza, designed as a landscaped area for children's programming and a place where people could sit and read. He also suggested that some of the additional money be found in the \$166,700 contingency funds.

Acton Councillor Clark Somerville, who noted that 60 per cent of the total cost was being funded by the Federal and Provincial governments, said the "project has been gifted to us."

While all councillors supported the additional \$64,000 for the River Street entrance and the \$353,000 for site work and accessibility, only

Councillors Dave Kentner, Moya Johnson, Clark Somerville and Jon Hurst voted in favour of an additional \$328,000 for the plaza.



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