

# Firefighters pleased with tone of initial meeting

By **KAREN SMITH**

*The Champion*

After only one meeting with the Town of Milton, morale among Milton's volunteer firefighters is reportedly on the rise.

Doug Craven, chairman of the Association of Milton Volunteer Firefighters, says members feel pleased following a recent gathering with Town officials.

"We had a really good discussion with (director of corporate services) Mr. (Jim) McQueen and chief administrative officer Mr. (David) Hipgrave," he said Tuesday.

The parties met July 23 after last month's outcry by volunteer firefighters, who say they've endured hardship and emotional trauma as a result of demoralizing acts by the department over the last 10 years.

One bone of contention was the firing of longtime volunteer firefighter Rick Rivett. The association placed an advertisement in this newspaper declaring their opposition to the firing and pre-

sented a 50-signature petition to the Town expressing their displeasure on a number of issues.

However, after a recent meeting between the two parties, association members now feel the Town realizes there's a morale problem involving more than a few people and is prepared to take their concerns seriously, Mr. Craven said.

He said he couldn't reveal details of discussions at the July 23 meeting because of an agreement reached between the two parties. The Town asked the firefighters not to discuss meeting proceedings publicly and they complied, he said.

"Because it (the meeting) was so productive, I'm going to respect their wishes."

The gathering also included full-time firefighters, Fire Chief Harold Penson and a representative from the Ontario Fire Marshal's Office.

Mr. Hipgrave, who called the meeting, was on holidays this past week and couldn't be reached for comment.

Mr. McQueen refused to publicly discuss any aspect of the gathering in light of the agreement.

"I have no comment. It was a staff meeting. It was not to be described later on," he said.

However, Mayor Gord Krantz, who didn't attend, said Mr. Hipgrave told him the gathering went well.

"He was pleased with the way it evolved," the mayor said.

Town council shot down the firefighters' call — in their petition — for an investigation into the operation of the Milton Fire Department, deciding that a master plan already in the works for the department would suffice.


It also took into consideration that Mr. Hipgrave and others planned to meet with firefighters in an attempt to sort out their concerns.

The petition, signed by volunteer firefighters and their wives, accuses the Town of discriminating in its management practices and allowing staff numbers to deteriorate to an unsafe level.

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