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A Metroland Community Newspaper Vol. 141 No. 65 Friday, October 27, 2000 36 Pages \$1.00 (GST included)



Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Bon appetit

Healthy eating was part of the grade 7 and 8 food and nutrition class at Hitherfield School — which recently held an open-house for parents — with students bringing in dishes from home for the class to sample. Here, Amanda McLean (left) shows off her scalloped turnips and apples dish while Jonathan Pietrobon holds up his oriental chicken and spinach salad.

Hearing wraps up

Sides now wait for decision on E.C. development bid

By IRENE GENTLE

The Champion

It's all over but the waiting.

A hearing into a controversial land development application at the E.C. Drury complex in Milton wrapped up Tuesday at roughly 8 p.m. after about three weeks of testimony.

At stake is 189 geared for seniors condominiums on a 33 acre site that was declared surplus by the Ernest C. Drury School for the Deaf in 1998. It was subsequently put up for sale by the Province.

The application outraged nearby residents, who felt the land would be better used as a park.

Their opposition was channeled into the formation of the citizen's group The Friends of E.C. Drury Park. The group has ferociously opposed the development — claiming it would have a negative impact on residents, the deaf community and an on-site woodlot.

OMB oversees battle

The hearing, before Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) officer W.R.F. Watty, saw counsel for developers H.D. Investments and Leisureworld Inc. Julia Ryan fighting for approval of the proposal.

Hal Watson, representing the Town, and Peter Pickfield, representing Friends, the Ontario Deaf Sports Association and the parent council of the Provincial school, battled against it.

The Milton Tennis Club has been a participant at the hearing, and also opposes the development.

Essentially, the proposal before the board would dedicate about 55 per cent of the land to the Town to be used as a park by residents. About 80 per cent of the woodlot would be preserved, and the schools would be given a new track, two soccer fields, and possibly a ball diamond.

But it would also carve a road between the schools and the woodlot, and lift the top portion of the land away.

Some residents have cited a concern that

the land was put up for sale without consulting the deaf community.

But in her closing argument, Ms Ryan said the OMB isn't the appropriate battleground for that issue.

"It's for the Province to decide how to best use its provincial assets," she said.

"In our view, it's not the job of the board to second guess the government's position."

Currently, the site is zoned institutional, allowing uses such as half-way houses, jails and nursing homes.

So while the public's desire to turn it into a park may be understandable, it isn't feasible, contended Ms Ryan.

"I acknowledge the public has used these lands for many years," she said.

"It's my submission that doesn't amount to legal entitlement."

She rejected arguments that the proposal will endanger deaf children.

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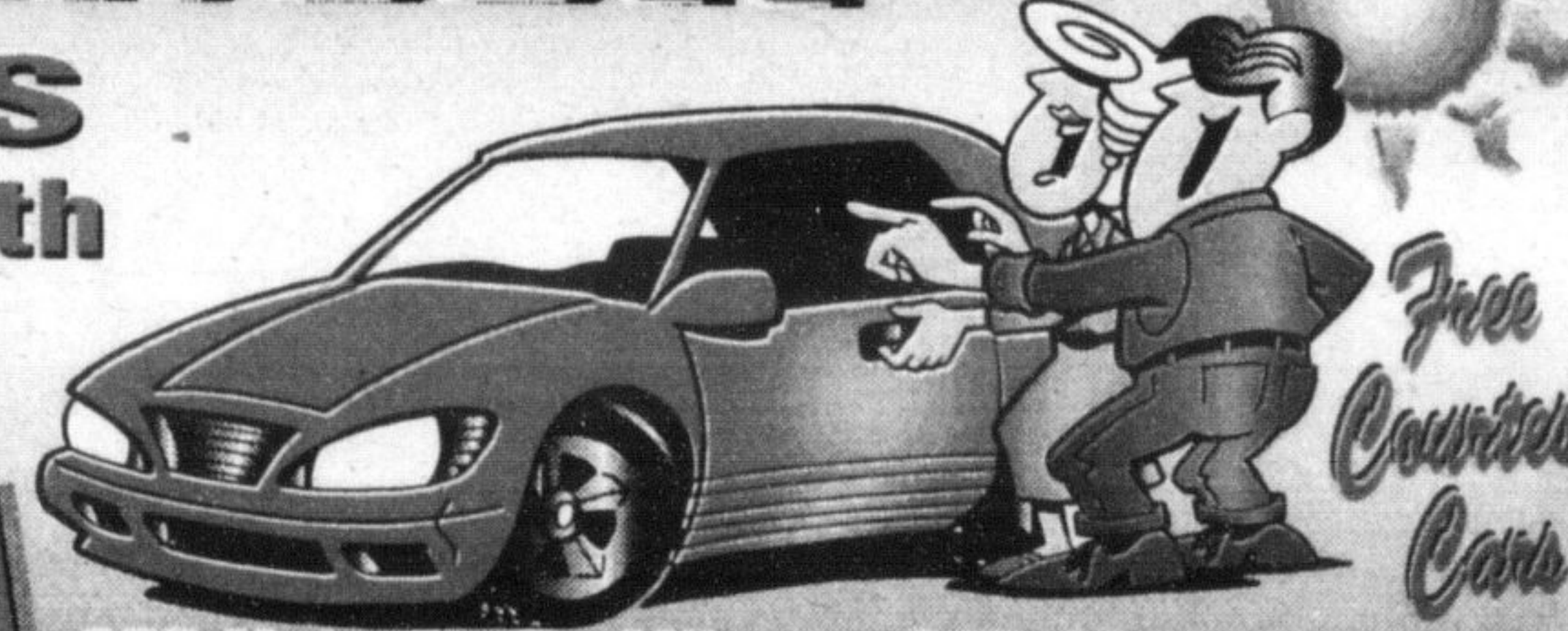
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