

Committee's recommendation to permit parking on narrow streets worries fire chief

By JASON MISNER
The Champion

A Town committee's recommendation to allow parking along narrow streets fitted with new curbs in a core area of town risks hampering the ability of emergency vehicles to get around the roads, warns Milton's fire chief.

"In my opinion there should not be parking (on narrow streets)," Fire Chief Harold Penson said in an interview after the Town's community services committee meeting last week.

Town bylaws state roads must be 8.6 metres wide to allow parking on the side, but most core streets are between 6 and 7 metres wide.

"We're going to be going into older areas with streets that are narrow and it's going to be hard to operate fire apparatus," Chief Penson said. "I feel sorry for them (core residents), but if you're going to widen the road, you must do it right."

The recommendation, passed unanimously by the committee, could see a combination of roads reconstructed and sidewalks upgraded and new ones built along Garnet, Sarah and Sydney streets and Lydia Avenue, costing \$779,000.

The roads, which currently have soft, gravel shoulders, would have curbs installed. The roadways would average about 6.6 metres in width.

Construction would start at the end of June and wrap up by early November. Town council still must ratify the recommendation at its meeting this Monday.

Part of the recommendation is that the

Town allow parking on one side of these narrow streets, provided there's no impact on public safety and two-way traffic isn't seriously impeded.

Essentially, it would be an exemption to the current bylaw. Vehicles currently park along both sides of the streets because there aren't any "no parking" signs. The recommendation is meant to bring these roads in line with the Town's parking policy. They would include signage to legally stipulate on what side of the road vehicles can park.

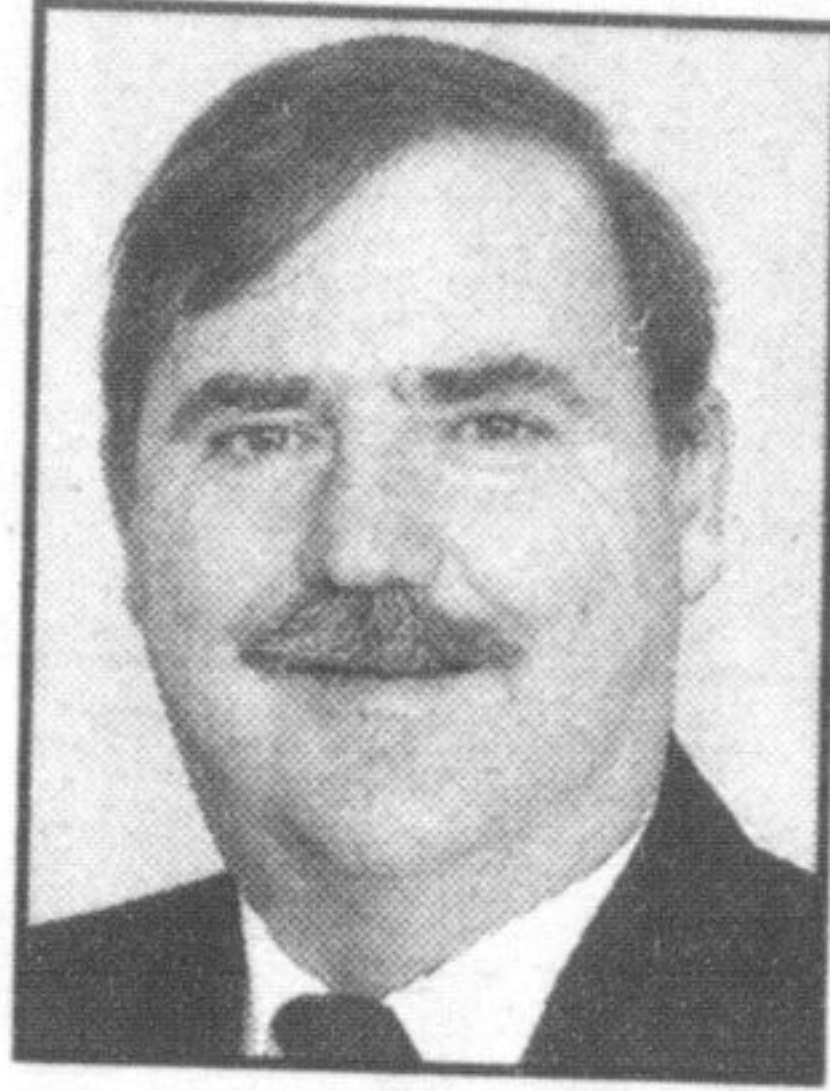
Because the roads have soft shoulders and no curbs, vehicles can park far enough off the street to allow emergency vehicles through, said Peter Linn, Milton's manager of engineering services.

Chief Penson is concerned the proposed curbs will make the streets too constrictive for parking.

Ward 4 Councillor Rick Malboeuf was shocked committee members didn't ask the fire chief more questions about his concerns before endorsing the recommendation.

"There was no thought or discussion on the chief's concerns," said Mr. Malboeuf, who asked the chief his opinion on the parking issue. "The chief's concerns are my concerns."

Last year residents were informed by the Town of potential changes to the streets in the core area of Milton. Many were upset



Harold Penson

that proposed construction could see mature trees removed. They were also concerned about where sidewalks would be placed and their width and about street parking.

For example, some residents on Lydia Avenue, between Garnet and Charles streets, were opposed to a sidewalk being built along one side. Concerns ranged from compromising the character of the older street to fearing a large oak tree would die due to construction.

Currently there are no sidewalks on either side of Lydia Avenue.

An ad-hoc committee, called the Milton Historical Home Owners Association (MHHOA), was formed to co-ordinate residents' concerns and see that the Town was aware of their issues.

Many were confused about why the Town felt compelled to apply new street standards to an old part of Milton that was built decades ago under different standards.

Brian Williams, chair of the MHHOA, told the committee that the three major concerns were protection of trees, parking on the street and fairness for how the street

modifications would be applied.

Overall, he said residents are "fairly satisfied" with the recommendations. But there are some outstanding issues that he hopes can still be addressed before construction.

They include deciding on which side of the street parking will be permitted, ensuring that the existing trees are in good shape once construction is completed and the installing traffic control devices, like stop signs.

"I'd like to make it clear we're pretty pleased with the process we went through," Mr. Williams said.

Theo Wolder, a member of MHHOA, told the committee he was disappointed residents weren't invited to participate in the project at the beginning.

He hopes the Town "speaks to citizens before they start drawing up plans because there can be a lot of concern, and it can be needless."

Mayor Gord Krantz acknowledged Mr. Wolder's concerns, and emphasized that the Town cares about what residents think.

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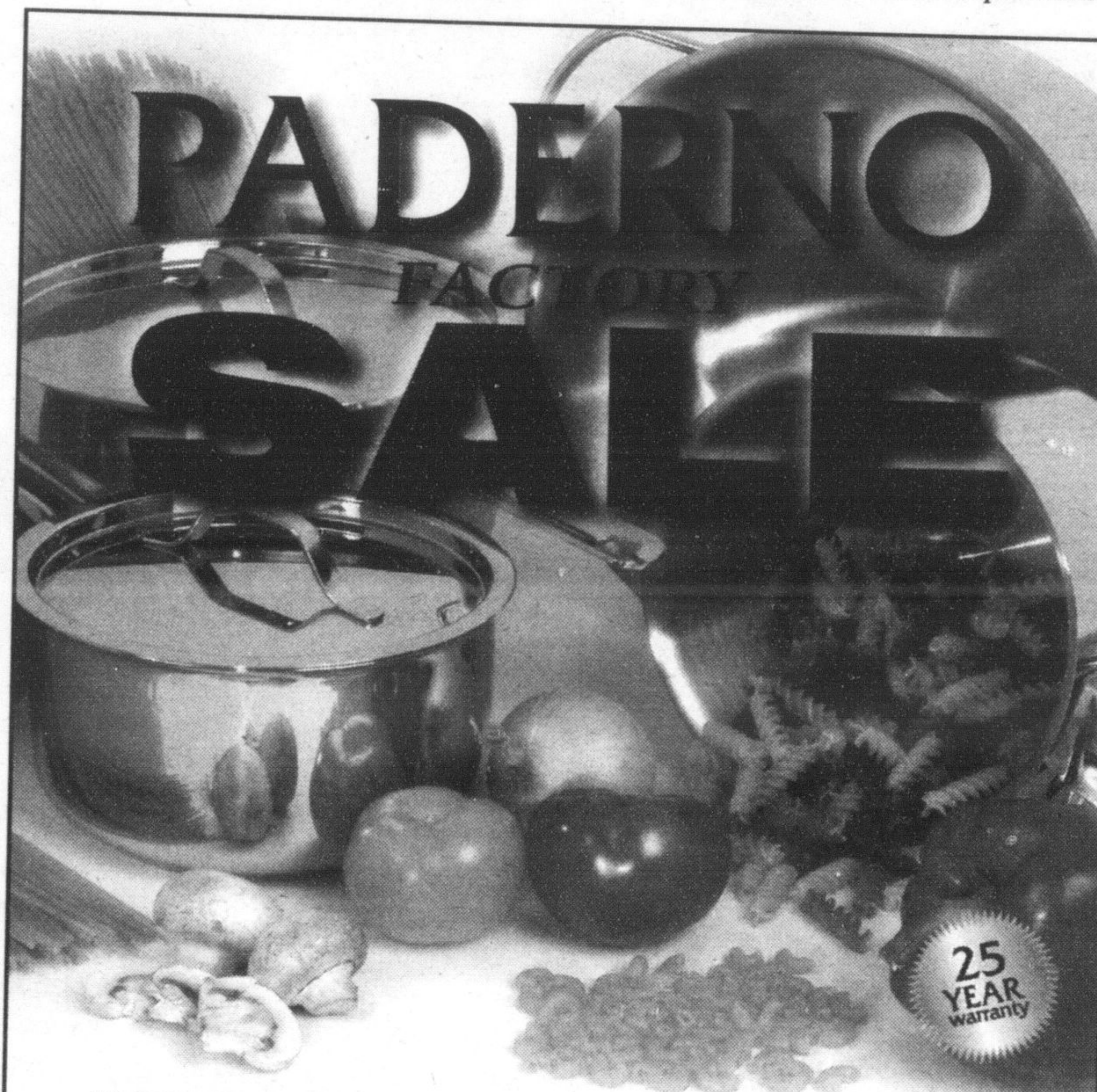
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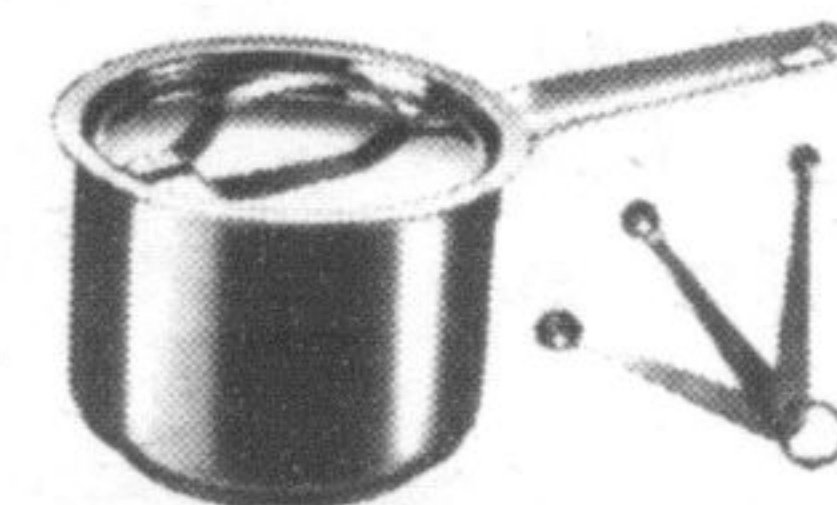
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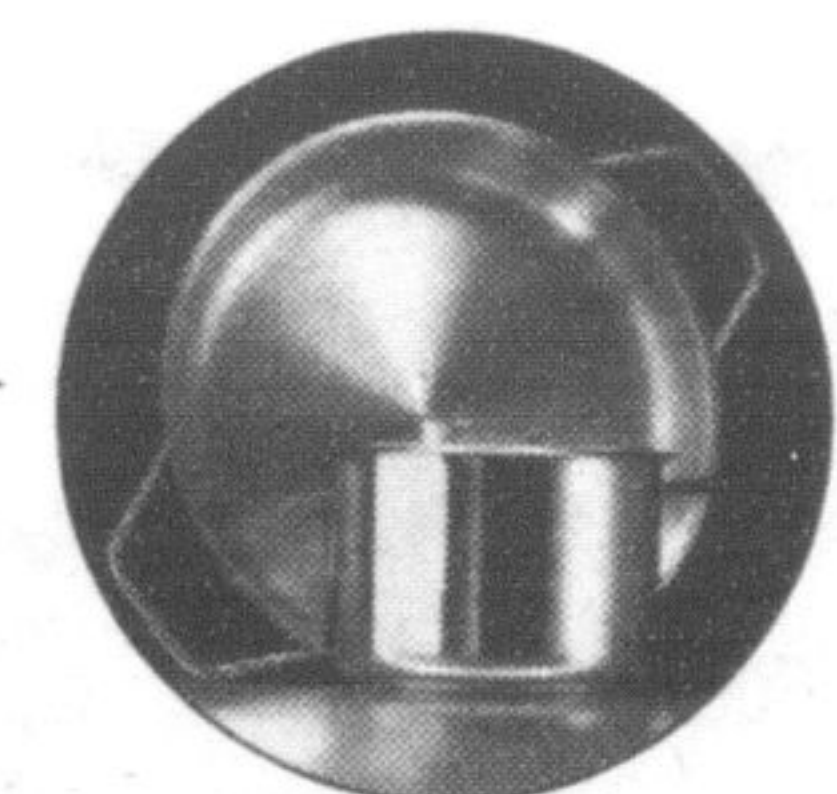
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