

BMX youths stage protest over lack of bike park

By MELANIE HENNESSEY
The Champion

About 50 local BMXers converged on Town Hall yesterday afternoon to protest the lack of a designated bike park in Milton.

The youths cast their bikes aside and piled into the municipal building to speak with Mayor Gord Krantz and Town staff about re-opening a bike park at its former location on Thompson Road.

The park, which was opened as a temporary location on a basketball court for skateboarders, BMXers and inline skaters, was shut down and the ramps removed after being deemed unsafe by Town staff.

A new skateboard park was built nearby, but BMXers are restricted from using it for insurance reasons, said Town Director of Community Services Jennifer Reynolds.

Now, Spokes 'n' Slopes owner Matt Burger, who

organized the protest, said local BMXers are taking to the streets and dangerous areas, such as behind factories, to do what they love.

"There just isn't enough in town for the kids," he said. "I'm basically on a mission to get a location for the kids to do BMXing again. I believe strongly there should be a safer place to ride."

He added that BMXers who still brave entering the skateboard park are usually kicked out by the police.

The youths asked the mayor to resurrect the old ramps and have them repaired and put back on the basketball court to be used again.

"We need somewhere to go. We should be allowed in the skateboard park until something's done," said 12-year-old Tommy Gingras of Milton. "I bought a bike, and now there's nowhere for me to go. It's become a huge issue."

Mr. Krantz said staff will consider the sugges-

tion and Ms Reynolds will contact Mr. Burger next week to further discuss the issue.

"I think this will start the ball rolling. I think the mayor is really going to make it happen," Mr. Burger said.

Recently, BMXers also temporarily lost the use of a BMX track at Drumquin Park, which was taken down for construction but is scheduled to re-open in the fall. Mr. Burger said the ramps at the initial skatepark were paid for by him and built by volunteering parents and kids.

He said the park was later taken over by the Town when the ramps started deteriorating. Ms Reynolds said about \$22,000 was put into materials for the ramps by the Town.

She added in the future, the Town could be building a permanent bike park.

Melanie Hennessey can be reached at mhennessy@miltoncanadianchampion.com.

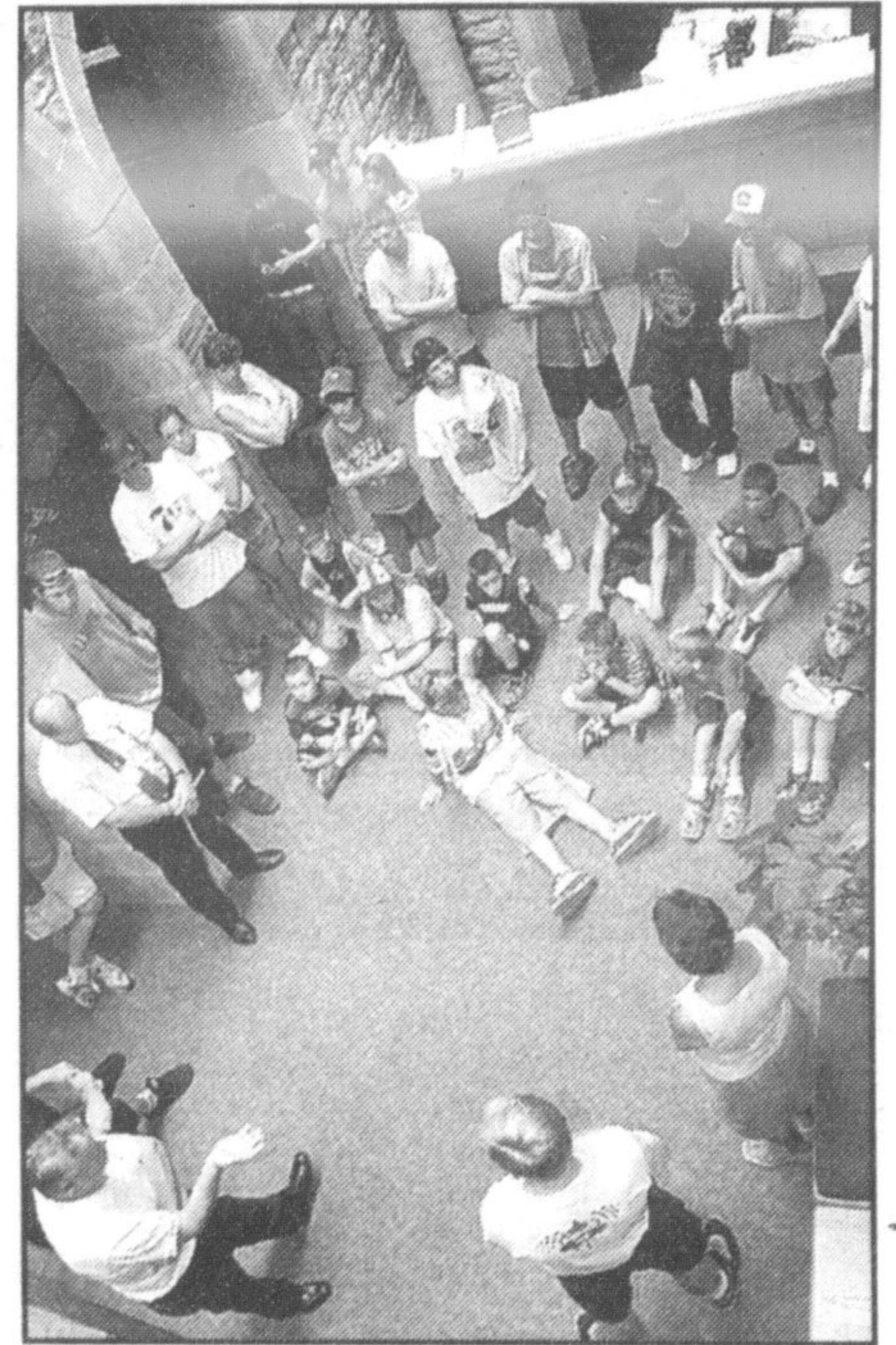


Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Youths gather inside Town Hall.

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