

Taxi owner's appeal denied

By MELANIE HENNESSEY
The Champion

An appeal of Town staff's decision to deny two taxicab owner's licences that would've put disabled-friendly vehicles on the road proved unsuccessful for local cab company Rainbow Taxi last week.

The appeal came before the administration and planning committee — which also serves as an appeal committee — March 21, where staff recommended the licensing officer's decision be upheld.

Town Licensing Administrator Selena Campbell said the licences were refused because Rainbow Taxi owner Sarbjit Kaur Brar isn't on the taxi plate waiting list, which holds prospective taxi brokers in the order in which applications are reviewed by the Town.

"The Town of Milton does encourage businesses to provide accessible service," Ms Campbell noted.

She went on to suggest that the two accessible vehicles be used to replace older vehicles in Rainbow Taxi's fleet.

But William Perras, the lawyer representing Rainbow Taxi, told the committee that just isn't an economically justifiable option given the significant additional costs related to the accessible cabs, which he noted cost about \$55,000 each.

In a letter to the Town, Mr. Perras argued his client's applications were for 'accessible' taxicab owner's licences, not taxi owner's licences, and that the waiting list shouldn't apply in that situation.

The letter noted that "an accessible taxicab is clearly separate and distinct from a regular taxicab."

Town solicitor Harold Watson didn't agree with Mr. Perras' position and detailed the reasons why, also in a letter.

He said that the definition of taxicab under the bylaw encompasses any motor vehicle kept or used for hire, so it also includes accessible taxicabs, and an owner's licence is required for the use of any taxicab.

Given the definitions, Mr. Watson said an accessible taxicab application is subject to the normal

waiting list procedure.

He noted the only real difference for accessible cabs is that there are some additional requirements in the bylaw for them.

The appeal committee's decision will go before Milton council tonight. Ward 3 Councillor Cindy Lunau said she'll bring forward a motion at the meeting calling for the accessibility advisory committee to look at the need for an accessible taxi service in Milton and comment to Town staff.

The motion also directs the Town clerk to consider the issue and report back to council.

"We need to determine whether there is a need for accessible taxis. I find it hard to believe there wouldn't be," Ms Lunau said.

"If there is a need, (we need to) find a way to make it happen. With the handicaps we face in this world, we should minimize the bureaucratic handicap. Procedure should never get in the way of need."

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Preliminary hearing tomorrow

The preliminary hearing of two men charged with first-degree murder in connection with the slaying of a Milton resident will begin tomorrow at Ontario Court of Justice in Burlington.

The hearing was to have began March 14, but was adjourned.

A publication ban will be in effect at the preliminary hearing — held to determine if there's enough evidence to go to trial.

Brian Stockton, 48, was found dead in a flaming car June 17 last year behind Traffic transport company on Regional Road 25, north

of Hwy. 401.

Halton Hills resident Michael James McDonough, 39, and Mississauga's John Kevin McClatchey, 47, were charged with first-degree murder. They were arrested the day after the murder at their homes.



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