

Delegations can now go straight to town council

By MELANIE HENNESSEY
The Champion

Milton council will soon amend its procedural bylaw to make it easier for local residents to speak before council.

At Monday night's meeting, council endorsed changing the bylaw to allow delegations to be heard at a committee or council meeting.

Currently, a resident must appear before a standing committee first and can only make a delegation to council if they have new information to present that wasn't available to them at the committee meeting or if a staff report bypasses committee and is presented directly to council. Or, councillors can also bring a motion to the council meeting to have a delegate added to the speaker list and if it receives support from the majority of council, that person can then make their presentation.

"They (delegations) can come straight to council if there's an item on the agenda which they want to address," Town Clerk Troy McHarg explained of the bylaw change.

The bylaw will also be amended to 'encourage' delegates to provide new information at a council meeting if the matter has previously been considered during a committee meeting.

Milton resident Mike Grimwood expressed concerns with the procedural changes, particularly the section of the bylaw that's to

be amended to read: "If there are numerous delegates wishing to address an issue, the clerk will encourage them to select one spokesperson to present their views within the allotted time frame."

"I don't understand why this change is taking place now," he said, noting he thinks it's making public input more difficult and complex. He recommended that the amendments be sent back to staff to make them "more comprehensive."

Mr. McHarg said it's the Town's current practice to encourage a spokesperson to be selected, it's just not spelt out in the existing bylaw.

"If they (delegates) don't want a spokesperson, that's fine," he said.

He noted the clerk's department may put individuals in touch with each other when they're registering as delegates on the same topic that there's a long list of speakers for to potentially select a spokesperson.

The issue of delegation length was also debated by council members. Staff recommended that a delegate who appears before council be limited to five minutes, which is the current practice of many area councils. But several councillors argued this would be too restrictive and pushed for the limit to be upped to 10 minutes — the same time frame set out for committee delegations.

"People may not be able to say all they want to say in five minutes," said Ward 4 Councillor Wendy Schau, noting this is particularly true on complex issues.

Ward 3 Councillor Jan Mowbray said she surveyed residents in her ward on the issue and found they wanted 10 minutes to speak at both committee and council meetings.

Council unanimously supported amending staff's recommendation from five minutes to 10. The updated bylaw will come back before council at its April 25 meeting.

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Martin case in court

A Brampton man charged with attempted murder in connection with the shooting of a Milton resident will return to Burlington court May 3 to be spoken to.

Basil Martin, 31, appeared at Ontario Court of Justice in Burlington March 23 when the return date was set.

Mr. Martin has also been charged with possession of firearms. November 11, a Milton man was shot several times in his torso at his Houston Drive home. A man turned himself in to police the next day.

Mr. Martin was released on bail into the care of his father and wife in November.

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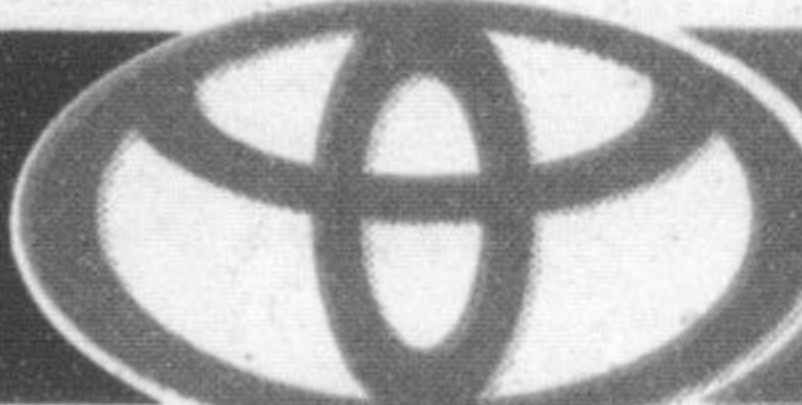
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