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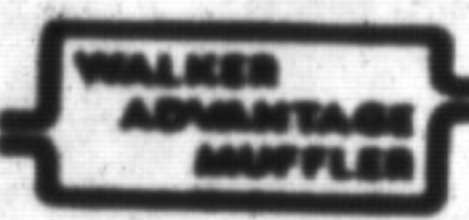
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Photo by JON BLACKER

Growing gifts

Each year the horticulture students at E. C. Drury High School offer a wide selection of gifts at their Christmas Sale. Showing some samples are from left Jackie McTavish, Elaine Starkiss, John Stevenson and Steve Beaulieu. The sale runs from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. this Friday and features poinsettias, crafts, baked goods and tropical plants.

Two retirement lot severance requests result in split decisions

By NORM NELSON

Two rural residents of neighbouring Halton Hills came up with convincing land severance arguments at a recent Halton Region planning and public works committee meeting.

Although staff recommended denial of their requests for retirement lots, the planning and public works committee sided with the applicants. The matter will come before regional council today.

Casey Boss told the committee he's been farming his 100-acre tract since 1953 and wishes to retire, leaving the operation in the hands of his sons.

The Halton Agriculture Advisory Committee considered the application and concurred that Mr. Boss is a bona fide farmer operating a commercial farm in Halton, and the land division committee approved the application.

Regional staff, however, argued that the farm is located in Niagara Escarpment protection area where only two new lots are allowed. Two lots had previously been created by a CN railway line and an Ontario Hydro corridor. "Therefore," stated the staff report, "the two new lot provision has been met."

Mr. Boss countered that he did not seek or even approve of these land severances.

Pat Murphy, from the region's legal staff, explained that whether the land severances were sought or not, the net result was the same — he could build residences on either or both of the two severances.

Mr. Boss pointed out that the creation of a retirement lot would result in far less land being taken out of agricultural use than if he utilized

one of the two existing severances. Milton Councillor Bill Johnson said Mr. Boss has farmed in the area for 36 years. "He's paid his dues. I don't want to see anyone living under hydro lines."

The other land severance application was in dispute because it narrowly exceeds a regional regulation. That regulation requires that a non-farm residence be allowed only between two existing non-farm residences which are not more than 100 metres apart.

Thomas Beer wants to build a retirement residence between two houses that are 115 metres apart.

The rationale behind the regulation is that if someone is allowed to build a home between houses more than 100 metres apart in a rural setting, the precedent can lead to a kind of strip residential development in a locale that is not recognized in regional planning as a rural cluster or hamlet.

Eventually, if that trend is allowed to continue, regional planners worry, a full-blown settlement can spring up with attendant calls for more roads, traffic control devices and other services in areas where planners didn't anticipate or want substantial development.

Rash Mohammed, the region's commissioner of planning and development, said the problem faced by staff is "where do you draw the line — 115, 120, 130 metres?"

Burlington councillor Rob Forbes, however, said the regulation has to be open to interpretation. Otherwise, he said, it would result in a silly situation where similar applications with distances of 101 and 99 metres are treated differently.