

Residents and HRCRA stop parking lot plans

Town abandons plan for 15-car lot at Campbellville Park

By SAL BOMMARITO
The Champion

The Town of Milton has abandoned a plan to construct a parking lot in Campbellville Park after a group of rural residents banded together to oppose the project.

In a closed-door meeting last month, Milton town council approved a resolution that the parking lot "not proceed at this time."

The resolution gave no further explanation of why public works staff had made the recommendation.

Residents became incensed last

spring after learning from newspaper accounts and their local councillors that town council had passed a resolution to construct a 15-space parking lot in the park, located at the corner of Campbellville Road and Guelph Line.

Cheryl Fromell, one of a dozen

residents who opposed the parking lot design, said she first learned of the plan upon her return home from a trip overseas.

"We were led to believe that nothing could be done. That it was a done-deal," said Ms Fromell, who moved to the hamlet from Toronto

two years ago.

As residents learned more about the project, they began to realize how much of a detriment it would be to the park, said Ms Fromell, who described it as the "focal point" of the hamlet.

The residents turned to the Halton Region Conservation Authority, which owns the parkland, for its help.

"That was our only salvation. (The HRCRA) are the real heroes," Ms Fromell said.

She said residents realized the support of the HRCRA would be crucial in stopping the project, which involved the town purchasing the necessary land from the authority.

Residents appeared before the authority's resource planning, fill and flood plain advisory board, which voted unanimously to defer the land transfer until residents had been consulted and the need for the parking lot could be justified.

"We knew they were going to fix up Guelph Line, but no one spoke about touching the park," recalled resident Juliana Smelko. "Ninety per cent of the people thought they were going to fix up the original parking lot," she added.

Town officials told residents the idea was supported by Campbellville merchants to alleviate parking and safety concerns at the corner. However, when Ms Smelko called several merchants, she said no one voiced support.

"I didn't meet anyone who thought it was a good idea."

Adding further to the residents' confusion, many were under the impression an open house held last fall dealt with the Guelph Line reconstruction, not the parking lot, she said.

"The whole issue of losing green space was never brought up," she noted.

Ward 3 municipal councillor Gerry Brooks praised the residents.

"It shows if you choose to get involved it can make a difference, especially at the municipal level," he said.

Ms Fromell said the parking lot incident was an eye-opener for Campbellville residents, adding now that the park has been saved, the group wants to see some improvements made.

"I think there's a positive reason why this happened. It's taught us not to be so apathetic," she said.

"We thought that if anything good comes from it, maybe we could have a ratepayers' group," Ms Smelko added.

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