

Town agrees to help restore Waldie Blacksmith Shop

By ANGELA BLACKBURN
The Champion

Milton's town council has agreed to spend \$2,500 to have another look at the feasibility of restoring and operating the 129-year-old Waldie Blacksmith Shop downtown.

"Heritage Milton (LACAC) considers the Waldie Blacksmith Shop to be a vital component of the town's heritage and remarkable for the fact that

it has remained largely intact upon the same site where it originated some 129 years ago," reported Town planner Mel Iovio.

"We're not looking to spend any money other than what's absolutely necessary to put the site back in operating condition. We're not proposing that the Town fund this. There are a lot of agencies that could be called in to help us do the funding and generate funding," said Heritage Milton

chair Dorrie Greig.

Although some councillors looked to past reviews of restoration for the property that didn't get off the ground, Mr. Iovio said at this point council was only sanctioning a steering committee to examine the feasibility and cost involved in restoring and operating the property.

Non-profit foundation
Heritage Milton put forward a four-

pronged request to the Town asking for the steering committee; that the Town initiate a non-profit foundation or trust to assist with fundraising; provide a commitment to maintain and display the building and its collection on the current site; and enter into discussions with the Waldie family to transfer the property to the Town.

"Even though it has been recommended a non-profit foundation

fundraise and operate the facility, the Town would ultimately be liable for any deficits accumulated," said Mr. Iovio, noting the Town should be aware of restoration and operating costs before making any such commitment.

Billing the restoration project as one that could involve all Milton and enhance civic pride, Ms Greig wrote, "We (Heritage Milton) are convinced the support and blessing of the Town of Milton would be instrumental in the success of this worthwhile project."

Restoration

Property co-owners, Marsha Waldie and her sister Gail Brown would prefer to restore the building themselves and operate it as a museum and tearoom. Personal funds don't allow that option.

They could go the route of a heritage designation and apply for Designated Property Grant funding, however the financing isn't guaranteed and couldn't assure full restoration.

The sisters are willing to give the building, its contents and property to the Town of Milton, or an interested group, for restoration, preservation on its existing site and use as a museum, education centre or tourist attraction.

"Both sisters would want to be involved in the project and its development," reported Ms Greig.

Three unsuccessful attempts were made between 1980 and 1990 to have the town become involved with the property. It appears previous councils had concerns with maintenance, operating and staffing costs, as opposed to the restoration itself.

Since 1865

The Waldie Blacksmith Shop had been operated by three generations of Waldies in the same location since 1865. It ceased commercial operation around 1969.

Within the building is a complete range of devices and tools for horse-shoeing and the making of ironware for wagon wheels. The sisters' great-grandfather's original paperwork on the business, as well as his smithing tools and original leather apron, are included along with hundreds of horseshoes of varying ages.

"What makes this site important to the Town of Milton is that, apart from condition, this blacksmith shop sits intact upon the same site where it opened its doors 129 years ago with most of its essential components intact or salvageable," said Ms Greig.

The building does need structural repair and the stonework over its original timber frame is deteriorating, and the collection requires cataloguing and cleaning.

"There's no question the collection housed within the structure must be saved," reported Ms Greig.

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