

Hunter slams Howard for 'immature' outburst



"I don't know where she is coming from on this."

WALLY HUNTER

By **BRAD REAUME**
The Champion

In the wake of a broadside from town Councillor Marion Howard, several of her colleagues are trying to understand her motivation.

Ms Howard tore a strip off her peers at last week's meeting of council, enumerating a wide-ranging list of grievances. She threatened to resign her council seat.

"I thought she was very unprofessional, cowardly and immature," said Councillor Wally Hunter. "She used a broad brush. It was a frustrating evening for those of us who are doing the job. I don't know where she is coming from on this."

Mr. Hunter brushed aside suggestions that councillors are engaged in back room sessions. He said councillors often call peers to "let them know what they are thinking." He said this type of attack is why many capable people will not run for municipal office.

"She has more or less admitted she's not doing the job, so maybe she should turn back her stipend," Mr. Hunter said. "I think she should apologize to council and the public."

Mr. Hunter said several of Ms Howard's suggestions have been adopted. He pointed to her push to prioritize budget spending by department and her efforts to stop the growth of rural estate subdivisions.

He also called her attack on heavy council representation on the Milton Public Library Board unfair, because several councillors are serving to cover for the sudden death of the chair (Bill Harrison).

He said her push to change the general committee structure into several smaller panels is strange considering she has a poor attendance record on subcommittees and voted to make the personnel subcommittee a permanent part of the present general committee.

"I think there are two types of councillor, those who do and those who won't and she has become one of those who won't," Mr. Hunter said. "In my eyes her credibility has dropped."

Campbellville Councillor Gerry Brooks said Ms. Howard's comments have caused him to reflect on the workings of council. He added that on the issue of back room politics, Ms Howard's comments reflect her particular perception of events.

Mr. Brooks said he was approached several years ago to participate in private discussions regarding council issues but declined, and has not received a phone call for a similar purpose in at least 3-4 years.

"I'm not comfortable discussing public issues in a private forum," he said. "I don't want to form an opinion prior to the meeting. I don't want to be encumbered by preconceived ideas on an issue."

Mr. Brooks said he could not say if the meetings were continuing because he has not been approached. However he said when a matter comes before council with a motion that has been moved and seconded, "It's not a huge leap to determine it has been discussed prior to the meeting."

Business is booming in Halton

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Mr. Kears said the trend toward large distribution points is occurring across North America as many manufacturers return to their core businesses and contract out the distribution of their products. Geographically Milton is well positioned to serve this trend, he said.

Also, "There has been a significant growth in small business registrations," said Mr. Kears. "We had 2,500 new businesses register in 1996, up about 300 from the year before. There has been a growth of about 3,500 jobs which is similar in total to the Ford plant."

Mr. Kears said the first few days of 1997 have continued the trend with many new businesses registering with Halton's business development arm. He added that while totally new "greenfield development" has been slow there are some companies considering such developments in Halton.

The other trend in business is 'big box' retailers who have huge stores aimed at a single market. These developments are especially noticeable in southern Halton. Mr. Kears attributed the 'big box' retail trend to careful consumers who are constantly comparing prices and selection.

"The real issue isn't the 'big box' trend, it is how will existing retailers compete," said Mr. Kears. "It's a market-driven thing but will be interesting to follow."

Mr. Kears said the 1990s have so far been characterized by a changing business environment, where companies try to become more streamlined and efficient by shedding peripheral businesses.

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