

Merchants defeat BIA, subject closed

by PETER SPOHN

It will be a few years before the subject of a BIA (Business Improvement Area) for the core area of Penetanguishene surfaces again as an issue. The latest proposal to establish a BIA in the town died Monday night when far more than the required number of merchants' signatures needed to defeat the BIA proposal were tabled at a town council meeting.

Forty-four core area merchants, representing nearly half of the core area merchants, signed petitions opposing establishment of a BIA. They represented about 43 per cent of the assessed value of core businesses, or

\$275,000 out of a total \$631,000 assessment. In both cases, it represented much more than the one-third required to defeat the proposal. (The assessed value is for taxation purposes only and does not reflect the real value of the Penetanguishene businesses).

The defeat came as a great disappointment to Bob Klug, the town councillor who spearheaded the drive to establish the BIA. Comments expressing his disappointment were echoed by Mayor Ron Bellisle. "I feel we've taken a step in the wrong direction," Bellisle said.

Klug said that merchants in favour of the proposal "did as much as could be done" in

trying to change the minds of those opposed. "I'm trying to understand it," he said in reference to their reasons for defeating it. "I think (they were seeing it) as another business tax," Klug commented. "Somehow it all got turned around." For a time this summer, BIA proponents were saying they felt they had the numbers this time to see the proposal safely passed. A previous attempt failed several years ago.

"Now the subject is closed," Klug said. The councillor added, though, that another attempt may be made again in a couple of years. Klug appeared particularly unhappy

because so much effort went into bringing merchants around to accepting the BIA concept. "I guess they're happy with the way things are," he said.

Klug also said that he detected conflict between "downtown" and "uptown" merchants in the community. Visiting merchants in the Poyntz Street mall to promote the BIA, "I'd say I was a downtown merchant and then find myself on the defensive with people in the mall."

The Poyntz Street mall was included in the designated BIA area along with Main Street Penetang businesses.

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Mayor slams reeve over county council vote

by PETER SPOHN

Mayor Ron Bellisle expressed unhappiness at Monday night's town council meeting over a vote cast at a Simcoe County council meeting by Reeve Art Stewart which, the mayor said, failed to convey Penetang's council's wishes.

Stewart voted with a majority during a recent meeting of Simcoe County council to exclude mayors from sitting on the council.

As reeve, Stewart represents Penetanguishene on county council. Reeves, rather than mayors, represent their municipalities at county level. The Simcoe County Urban Mayors' Association is trying to change that. The association has Penetang town council's support for including the mayors. During a Penetang council vote on the matter earlier this year, all councillors, except Stewart and Councillor Lionel Dion, supported the mayors' inclusion.

The mayor told council: "For some reason, Reeve Stewart (voted against) it." Adding that he didn't necessarily have a personal stake in the matter since he is undecided about his intentions in the 1985 municipal election, Bellisle said that the wishes of Penetang's council "were not conveyed." Stewart replied that Penetang council's feelings were conveyed during a county council executive session, as well as a planning session. But, he said, a recommendation resulted which opposed inclusion of the mayors. During a full county council meeting, Stewart voted with the majority opposing the mayors' inclusion. "I felt as chairman (of a committee) there wasn't reason enough to change the act (which governs the operation of

county council)," Stewart said. He estimated that it would cost between \$3,000 and \$4,000 to amend the act.

"I'm voted in by the taxpayers of Penetanguishene," Stewart said. "I don't have to vote the way council wants me to."

Bellisle said that the mayors' association is not prepared to let the matter drop. He also said that the association was in touch with a Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing official who floated the possibility that a town councillor in a position such as Stewart's who votes against the majority view of his local council at the county council level "could have a conflict of interest."

Bellisle said that he

was "saddened" by Stewart's move. "We certainly intend to pursue it," he added. Stewart said that when he is no longer in the position of heading a county council committee, "I may have a change of heart (on the inclusion of the mayors)."

Other councillors pointed out that the municipalities pay for the operation of county council and that theoretically they are paying for nothing if the collective wish of council is not conveyed to county council. Councillor Larry Bellisle said: "...if our wishes can't be transferred to Simcoe County, then we have no pipeline." Near the end of the discussion Stewart said: "Thank you for the vote of confidence." Bellisle

said he hoped the difference between the two would not extend to the personal level.

The question of council's representation was raised again later in the meeting when Larry Bellisle questioned whether local councils' autonomy would be threatened if county council attempted to present local councils with resolutions it passed affecting the local councils. "We would lose all autonomy (if) they tried to come in through the back door." He said that if Stewart was worried about the costs incurred by changing the county council's charter, as he said earlier in the meeting, the money could be lost anyway in a county council decision costing the local councils money.



Gift from Penetang Legion

Marlene Jackson, director of nursing at Penetanguishene General Hospital, demonstrates how the hospital's new emergency room

examining light works. It was a gift from the Penetanguishene branch of the Royal Canadian Legion, and cost \$1,500.

Town will use 1980 market value for taxes

Beginning in the 1985 taxation year, Penetanguishene ratepayers will pay municipal taxes based on 1980 market value assessments of their properties. Current assessments used for taxation purposes reflect market values which are decades out of date.

Under revised assessments, 54 per cent of properties in Penetanguishene would increase in assessment while 44 per cent will decrease. This means that slightly more than half the town's taxpayers will pay more in taxes next year while slightly less than half will pay less. The changes in most cases are not expected to be dramatic, and total tax assessment will not change, it was noted during the council meeting. All councillors supported the move to market value assessment, including one councillor who told his council colleagues

that he previously had some qualms about the change. "It will distribute the tax burden more evenly in town," said Betty Valentine, one of two municipal office employees who were at the meeting to discuss market value assessment.

Increases in assessment will result for one of three reasons: tax allowances that have been overlooked over the years by the municipal office; inequities in the 1940s method of assessing which may have resulted in unfair assessments; additions made on homes since 1970 that were under \$2,500 in value, and which were not added onto the assessed value of the home.

Taxes on 106 properties out of 1,212 which will be taxed more will increase by more than \$150. The rest in the group subject to an increase will go up by

between \$5 and \$150. About 80 properties out of 1,052 which will be

taxed less will decrease by \$150 or more. Several in this

group will go down considerably more than that.

An open house to explain the changes to taxpayers is to be held.

Memories lose sixth in a row

Penetang Memories basketball team lost their sixth game in a row this season 80-59 against Mike's Milk from Barrie at MSS last Thursday night.

Barrie's strong rebounding proved to make the difference in the contest.

Brent Hamelin netted 12 and Doug Cairncross with 10 were Memories high scorers.

Looking for their second win of the season, Memories play CFB Borden in a road game this Thursday night.



Playing on a nice day

Stewart Jones (left) of Midland and John Bishop of Penetanguishene enjoy the sunny, mild weather on Monday by taking an early break

from work and hitting the trails on dirt bikes. The weather was expected to turn much cooler by the end of the week, forecasters said.