

# Sunset Beach Residents Want Time Extension And Compensation

By MARY DAWSON  
Summer and year-round residents in cottages on the town-owned property at Lake Wilcox known as Sunset Beach were present at the council chambers to discuss their problems with Richmond Hill Council August 19. About 25 cottages remain on the property and occupants have been advised to vacate the land purchased by the town last year by May 31, 1975.

Spokesman for the group was Mrs. Elsie Norton, a summer resident, who stated, "We at Lake Wilcox weren't really given a fair deal on the notices of eviction, and were given no chance to debate them. The notices were not sent around until most cottagers had gone back to the city and we found the notices stuck in the doors when we returned this spring. We would like to know what you intend to do with the property. We have heard you are planning a floating dance hall there, a high rise development and a trailer camp. If you have no designs on the park without an official plan we are interested in an extension of time. We don't think we should have to pay to demolish our cottages and we believe we should receive some compensation for the cottages."

Mrs. Norton, a relative newcomer to the beach, said she had been assured by the former owner that she would have a 50-year lease on the property and has witnesses to prove it. She told council she will be paying for her cottage for two years after it is demolished under the present deadline.

The town took an option on the 14-acre property in mid-May 1973 at \$185,000, with closing date to be October 1. The land was purchased to be developed as a park for the use of the whole town. Vacant cottages and the booth which were in dilapidated condition have already been seized. Some residents are tenants in town-owned property, others own their own cottages but lease the land on which they stand. None had written leases from the former landlord. This spring notices were sent or delivered to all to vacate their properties by May 31, 1975.

Mayor William Lazenby gave a brief resume of the property's ownership recalling that it was sold by Mrs. Ash to Sedore in 1964 and by Sedore to Hipkin in 1970. "From a legal point of view, the municipality understood the tenants were on a yearly basis — some paid rent monthly, some on a yearly basis and others on a catch-as-catch-can basis. Our solicitor advised us that only one month's notice would be required, but we decided not to issue eviction notices until we were ready to develop the park and so this spring gave the tenants a year's notice. Sunset Beach was de-

"If a private developer had brought the property, he could have given you one year's notice, instead of the almost two years since negotiations started you will be getting. You should have had some kind of written lease agreement with Mr. Hipkin," answered the mayor.

"I would like to know if any high pressure was put on Mr. Hipkin by this municipality. I took a man up to see him who offered him \$240,000 and he sold the property wasn't for sale," said Mrs. Norton. She could not remember the exact date, but the estimated date would have been after the town had taken an option to purchase.

**PUT ON MARKET**  
Later in the evening, Mayor Lazenby told members of council that the property was put on the market by Mr. Hipkin through Realtor Jack Blyth, who brought it to the attention of the mayor and of Regional Councillor Gordon Rowe before offering it to the public. He said Mr. Hipkin had paid \$170,000 for the property in 1970 and the town paid him \$185,000.

**SENIOR CITIZENS**  
The mayor told Mrs. Norton that if any senior citizens would be dispossessed, new senior citizens apartments will be available in Richmond Hill in May next year and if they make application they will have priority on these apartments. He also suggested that council could consider applications from parents of school children for a six week extension to permit the children to finish their school year.

Answering a question from the mayor, Mrs. Norton suggested an extension of five years, but Mr. Wehrmann (a year-round park resident) suggested an extension until the town is ready to develop the property.

**47 YEARS**  
A summer resident for 14 years, a Mr. Peterson asked Mr. Hamilton for an exact date "when you are going to start planning." Mr. Hamilton's answer was that it's being planned now. "We hope to move in there and start next year as soon as council approves the necessary funds. I don't think anyone can give you an exact date."

Another man said he had been a tenant there for 47 years. "Is there a date when council decides to sell parkland if it is not used as such?" asked Mr. Peterson. The answer was no.

"There is a possibility you may not have the money to develop the park. What's our chances of staying?" asked Mrs. Norton. "That's a decision for council to make," replied Mr. Hamilton. Mr. Wehrmann asked why the Mill Pond, the Oak

Ridges Swamp, Lake St. George and the Lions Park haven't been further developed. He said that at a previous meeting of council it was made clear consideration might be given to compensation and that families would be relocated in government housing.

**CONSERVATION AREAS**  
Mayor Lazenby pointed out that the four projects mentioned, are completely or partially within the jurisdiction of Metro Conservation Authority, not of the town. The town is involved in the Mill Pond and has planned and set aside money for its development but the problem was at the provincial level.

**BOUGHT IN GOOD FAITH**  
Mr. Wehrmann told council the tenants had tried to get written leases and couldn't and were in no legal position to get them. "I bought my cottage one week before Sedore sold to Hipkin and there was no mention of the sale. We bought our places in good faith and believe we are entitled to compensation on moral grounds. No one would have maintained the property if they had known they would be evicted and would also have to remove their cottages."

The Spadina Expressway, the Island residents and other Metro situations were cited by members of the delegation to back up their pleas for an extension of time and compensation.

Another cottager complained that they had received a notice of where to pay their rent by registered mail but that the eviction notice had been stuck in the door of the cottage. Mr. Hamilton explained that the registered letters had been sent with a reply card so the town would know if they had the correct addresses. "Only two were returned as undeliverable," he said. "I think it's a raw deal," said another. "I wish I had known this 14 years ago." Mrs. Norton said, "Don't you think you took advantage of us for parkland which is not needed? We're going to stop here. We're going to fight on. I don't feel you are giving us a fair deal." Town Clerk Mack Clement referred to a letter from Mr. Hipkin's lawyer which stated the Toronto address of Mrs. Norton and one other tenant had been lost to explain the delay in their receipt of the eviction notice.

Mr. Wehrmann charged that the town is destroying the community, which includes Sunset Beach. He also charged the town with failure to replace the community centre as promised.

**BUILDING PLANNED**  
Regional Councillor Gordon Rowe pointed out that in the official plan of Whitchurch Township, it was

stated that no further development would be permitted in the Lake Wilcox area until a study had been made. "We hoped to do it with the Region, but the Region reneged on its responsibility and it was done wholly by the town. I headed the committee and it was my desire that there would be public participation all along the line. We had numerous discussions and have yet to hear from an official representative of your group and we have held public meetings but just never got that input. I have never seen undue hardships imposed by this municipality on anyone. We have submitted preliminary reports to various government agencies to see if any type of assistance is available for housing, sewage disposal and water in that area. We hope soon to get some replies to help us on our way." He also pointed out that plans are underway for a building of a similar nature to the community centre on Wildwood which was torn down when it was condemned.

Mrs. Anne Gold attacked Mr. Rowe's statement that the Region had reneged. "I was told it was the decision of this council not to have the Region participate on an 80-20 percent split." She also asked if the funds for the development of Sunset Beach would have to be debentured. "Major expenditures (over \$25,000) such as for a building are usually debentured," replied the mayor. "But minor expenditures for development would likely come from the current budget."

Mrs. Gold pointed out that council is considering leasing a portion of a park property it has acquired for \$800,000 in the Leslie - 19th Avenue area to private interests for a harness racing track. "Have we any guarantee that council will not do the same type of thing at Sunset Beach?" she asked. "There is no guarantee. It is at the whim of the individual council," replied the mayor.

Mrs. Gold also attacked the statement that the Region might re-align Bayview Avenue, in view of delays in action on the Gormley grade separation and road improvements. "I've spoken to Mr. Hodgson, (the Regional engineer)," replied Mr. Rowe. "This project on Bayview, although in the future, is considered a priority. But there are other priorities. I am going to continue to press for it and hope to move it up in priority."

**SCHILLER RECOMMENDS LEASE**  
At the request of the mayor, David Schiller, former Councillor, a lawyer and candidate for the mayorality in this year's election, commented that he hoped the park consultants had recognized the problem of Bayview Avenue. "I am not aware of the final status of the Lake Wilcox Study but one of this council's stated policies is to do a study of parks and establish priorities. Work on Sunset Beach won't proceed until funds are allocated by council, and if my memory serves me, that won't come until June or July. I would like to suggest the municipality formalize leases starting in September this year and running until August 31, 1975. These would require 60-days notice."

Councillor Lou Wainwright recalled that the purchase of the parkland was not a unanimous decision of council. "However, as I recall it, council was looking at the long time future and acquired the park when it was on the market. At that time, leases were not mentioned. I think it unfair to say council took advantage of no leases. Maybe we should be looking at an extension."

Regional Councillor Lois Hancey said, "I'm in an extremely difficult position, because I was totally and unalterably opposed to the purchase as I considered it premature and there was no plan. It is the right thing to do to put a plan on the property. If it is in the public good, there should be a plan and there should be a financial plan to make it possible. This council cannot commit next year's council to funds. I have to know what the financial implications are for physical improvements, staffing, maintenance and programs both short term and long term. I think the people have every right to come to council and ask for a lease but I also think they must be ready to say that when we are ready they will vacate. It's got to be a two-way street. The owners must not sell their cottages to someone else to try to get their money back and 30 or 60 days notice will be given when council has the funds to start short term development."

"I would like to talk to the solicitor about extension of time. I would like to see the park plans and determine what is the objective of the parks and recreation committee for next year, before reaching a decision," said the mayor. "We will also investigate some method of payment for demolition. The new Minister of Urban Affairs Barney Danson was in to see me today and may be with his help, we can find some assistance."

**LAKE FRONTAGE**  
"It's got lake frontage, which I'm sure the recreation director will want to use in next summer's program," stated the mayor.

"Why is the property free-leased from Mr. Proctor (adjoining Sunset Beach) locked up? That makes it difficult for the people at the Lake," said Mrs. Norton.

The mayor explained that the people living around Lake Wilcox had expressed deep concern about the use of the lake by high-powered motor boats, so the gates were locked to keep them out.

Brian Jones reported that the government had a summer school for children there last year. "This year they couldn't get in but had to park on the road and the kids had to climb over the fence. Why?"

"That would be the OYF program," said Mr. Hamilton, "and I gave them two keys to the lock."

"If my kids gets hurt who's responsible?" asked Mr. Jones. The town has posted signs stating that users of the beach do so at their own risk this year. No lifeguards are in attendance.

**COME BACK TO COUNCIL**  
The mayor asked the group to come back to a council meeting later for a definite answer, and prom-

ised that they would be notified and given an opportunity to speak.

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