

Upset mayor says racing commission's decision is disappointing

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ishment of a teletheatre at that location," Sadinsky said in his oral ruling.

"In the absence of clear opposition, which was the position taken in January, we are prepared to grant the licence as

requested," he said.

Mayor Don Cousens reacted with disbelief.

"I am extremely disappointed that disposition was made in light of council's position earlier and in light of public opposition to it and in light of what we are trying to do on Main Street," he said. "We will have to look and see what options are

available to us."

The panel imposed four conditions, agreed to by both Patterson and co-owner Marty Toombs and the town, including that no video lottery terminals be on the site; that hours of operation be 11 a.m. to midnight, except for special events when owners would need council permission to stay open later; that a liquor licence be obtained within 120 days and if there are any problems, both parties have the right to go back to the ORC.

Complicating the issue was a July 27 revision to the rules governing municipal approval.

Before, teletheatre applicants had to obtain a letter from municipal officials indicating there were no objections. Now, municipal officials must register their opposition in writing. If no objections are received, approval is assumed.

While Sadinsky gave both the Ontario Jockey Club, which applied for the licence, and Robinson the option of operating under the old rules, they agreed to continue under the revised requirements.

"My only concern would be that the OJC would somehow file a fresh application under the new rules," Robinson said.

"We will ensure no one will be prejudiced," Sadinsky replied.

Patterson and Toombs faced financial disaster after council opposed the business the week before its grand opening and after \$400,000 was spent on renovations and equipment.

They received two letters of non-objection from local ward councillors, but that was vetoed by Cousens, who took the issue to a council vote in January, a vote that went against them.

In June, Cousens agreed to re-open the debate. A public meeting was held, with more people in support than in opposition. At the July council meeting, Cousens accepted two petitions and a deputation in opposition.

That night's vote ended in the six-six tie.

"Half of council said yes, half said no. Half the people want it, half the people don't," Robinson said after the hearing. "In the end, the ORC felt they could not rule that it was contrary to the public interest."

ORC director Brian Brett was beaming after the ruling was made. "We're overjoyed," he said. "We could be up and running within 90 days."

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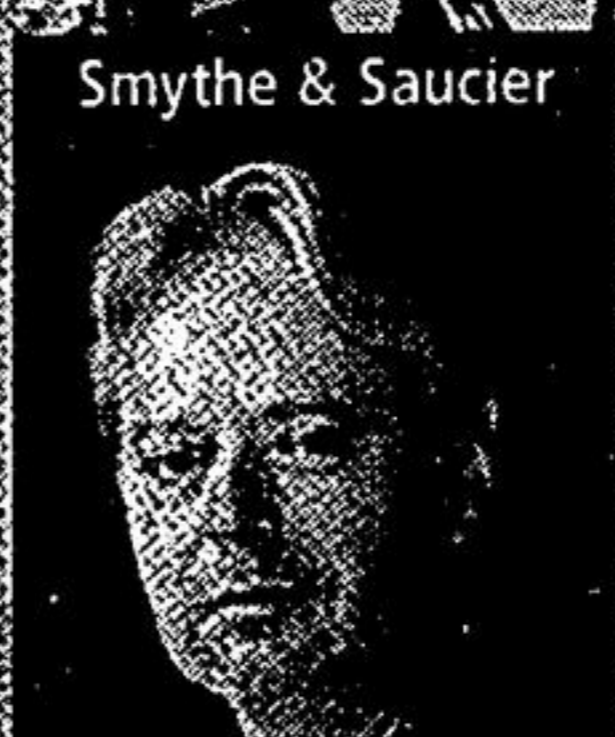
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