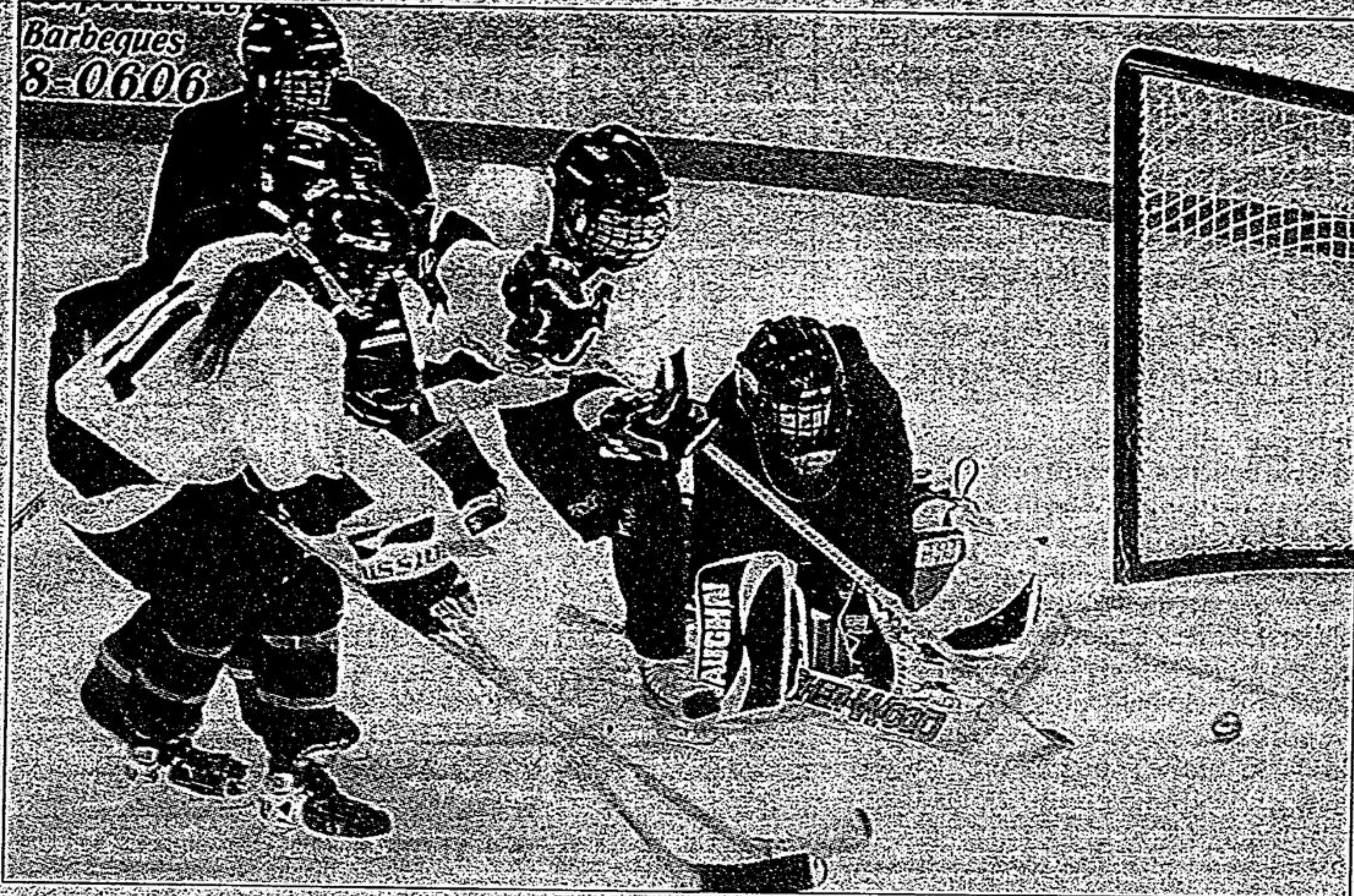


SHE SHOTS, SHE SCORES



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Hayley Hughes of the Stouffville District Secondary School Spartans sweeps around Aurora High School goalie Jesse Johanson to score the Spartans' second goal in the first period of a game at the Stouffville Arena Tuesday afternoon. Teammate Laurie McLellan is at left. Stouffville won 4-1.

Municipalities given time to review density plan

BY ROY GREEN
Staff Writer

Faced with the image of blocks of highrise towers lining Yonge Street and Hwy. 7, York Region's planning committee has agreed to give local municipalities more time to review the region's growth plans.

The region's centres and corridors strategy, which calls for higher density development along major transportation corridors, raised hackles at Wednesday's meeting of the planning and economic development committee.

"You say this report was circulated to area municipalities, but this is the first time I've seen it," Vaughan Regional Councillor Mario Ferri said. "If we approve this today, then it gets approved by council, it's all over."

Richmond Hill Mayor Bill Bell agreed.

"This came out before Christmas and I read about this (higher density) plan in Metroland (newspapers) and now I'm being asked to approve it."

In a recent York Region Newspaper Group story, Richmond Hill Councillor David Cohen said the region was trying to push through an official plan amendment that would allow much higher density in core areas without the approval of local municipalities.

But Regional chairperson Bill Fisch told the committee endorsing the strategy would not result in loss of local control.

"By endorsing this, it doesn't mean there will be canyons of 30-storey blocks on Yonge Street from Steeles Avenue to Newmarket and from Hwy. 50 to Markham," Mr. Fisch said. "There will be highrises in certain locations — it's going to happen whether we agree or not, but it will be a local issue."

Planning commissioner Bryan Tuckey said the regional official plan amendment was simply a draft.

"It was issued in draft form for public discussion, there will be complete and detailed consultation with the local municipalities," Mr. Tuckey said. "We're

simply asking them to identify some areas where more compact development would be appropriate."

The committee agreed to table the discussions until local councils can study the strategy in more detail. There are also plans to run a series of meetings on the strategy with area councils.

The committee also dealt with a controversial proposal for a 14-storey apartment building on Yonge Street in Richmond Hill.

A number of residents were on hand asking the region to oppose the project, which has already been rejected by Richmond Hill council, when it comes before the Ontario Municipal Board in February.

They are upset because the owner, after working out a compromise with neighbours on an eight-storey building on the site in 1991, changed his mind and is now seeking the 14-storey, 400-unit building.

There will be highrises in certain locations — it's going to happen whether we agree or not, but it will be a local issue.

"It's fitting this is on the same agenda as the centres and corridors study," committee chairperson Frank Scarpitti said. "We want to increase density, but we want to do it in a way that respects the community."

A staff report on the project recommended the region tell the OMB it had no objections to the plan, but the committee rejected that.

"We should tell the OMB that the original plan (for the eight-storey building) already meets the objectives of the (centres and corridors) strategy and the wishes of Richmond Hill council should be fully considered," Richmond Hill Regional Councillor Brenda Hogg said.

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