UNIONVILLE News and Features

Bypass road for Unionville closer to reality

UNIONVILLE - Present indications are that Unionville will get its long-awaited bypass.

The question of building a road to carry traffic around the downtown section of Kennedy Road has been a major issue in the past. It came up again at a meeting of Markham Council, Nov. 23.

Council members were considering various streets throughout the town, and a motion was made to exempt from discussion "Kennedy Road from No. 7 Highway to 16th Avenue, as the Town intends to construct a bypass". This was later altered to read "...the Town intends that a proposed bypass shall be constructed".

Markham's Assistant Planning Director, Mr. Powell, said his department had received a letter from a local resident, enquiring about this. He admitted that a study has been done on the Unionville situation, but said no presentation has yet been made to Council.

"At this time, we have nothing for public consumption", he said.

Unionville Fire Hall

A central dispatching office

On the outside, the firehall in the centre of Unionville, appears quiet - almost abandoned. But inside, the equipment, including this fancy new rig, is very modern. And when the siren sounds, action is instantaneous. The Fire Chief is Meryl Smith.

—Mark Niblett.

UNIONVILLE - The fire hall in Unionville is not a very impressive building.

It's just a cement-block structure sitting back from Kennedy Road in the middle of the village. The front of it is taken up by two large garage doors. Unless you happen to notice signs saying "No Parking, Fire Exit", you might never figure out its functional purpose.

But things happen around there. Inside, there are usually three trucks: two pumpers and a tanker. A force of 4 full-time and 22 volunteer fire fighters man the hall. All are local residents. The volunteers are summoned by a siren on the roof of Crosby Memorial Arena.

There is no Unionville Fire Department any more. It vanished years ago, and the station is now merely District 2 of the Markham Fire Department.

Markham's Chief, Myrl Smith, is thoroughly familiar with the Unionville station. He joined the Unionville Fire Department in 1948, and became chief 9 years later. The former Township took over responsibility for fire-fighting in 1964.

There haven't been any really disastrous fires in Unionville itself, said Chief Smith. Local units have helped out with some big blazes, though, notably the Thornhill fire of 1947 and more recently the Stouffville fire. The men are kept busy with training exercises, and a fire-prevention program is conducted in the schools and with such groups as the Girl Guides.

There have been some recent changes around the hall. A large radio mast was installed a few days ago and this station will become the central dispatching post for all three Markham stations. Direct alarms from a few places, such as Union Villa, are hooked into the station; such alarms will be increased shortly.

"You can save 2 or 3 minutes easily", explained Chief Smith.

Plans are also underway for the Unionville hall to handle all "after hours" emergency calls, such as hydro or water breaks. There may someday be a new hall, but Chief Smith estimates this is "6 or 7 years away". An aerial ladder is another future project.

Meryl Smith can remember the old department. At one time, trucks were housed in a garage next to his house, on the east side of Kennedy Road.

"For years, I used to ring the bell myself whenever a call came in", he said.

The future will not pass Unionville by, as far as the fire hall goes. There has been some kind of fire-fighting unit in the village since at least 1923, and there will be some there for many years to come. A strategic position favors Unionville, placed as it is in just about the exact centre of the Township of Markham.

The station is a friendly place in Unionville. When one of the trucks is sitting outside, residents stop and chat with the firemen. Like the Post Office or the Arena, the fire hall is a sort of mini community centre. It is impossible to imagine the village without such centres.

But despite the relaxed air and friendliness around the fire hall, there is an underlying impression of unyielding efficiency. You feel that at a moment's notice the talk might be cut off, the coffee abandoned, the real business begin.

Plan separate school

UNIONVILLE - The construction of a new school in this village will soon be getting underway, according to an announcement from the Roman Catholic Separate School Board.

Mr. F. Hodge, Board Superintendent, announced recently that tenders will be called for building the school, to be known as "John XXIII". The Board presently owns a seven-acre site, and has authorized expenditures of more than $450,000 for construction.

High-speed chase

UNIONVILLE - A 16 year old Unionville youth faces two charges, one of criminal negligence and another of possession of a stolen auto, following a chase on Hwy. 401.

Roderick Jones was arrested by the Cobourg Detachment, Ontario Provincial Police.

The 1971 model car was reported taken from a lot at Unionville Motors.

At the height of the chase, speeds reached 100 miles per hour, police said.

Sgt. Donald Dukes

Buttonville - 'home' for eighteen years

BUTTONVILLE - It's twelve miles from the Buttonville Detachment of York Regional Police to the Police Office at Vandorf.

But for Patrol Sergeant Donald Dukes, the distance between the two points Nov. 22, probably seemed more like 1,200. Prior to that date, the Buttonville station had been his 'second home' for 18 years.

Patrol Sgt. Dukes fills a vacancy at Vandorf, created through the shift of Sgt. Frank Munroe to Vaughan. With the closing of the Vandorf Station, planned for early December, it is understood that Sgt. Dukes will be assigned to the radio room at Newmarket. His home is at 21 Hawkridge Avenue, Markham.

Sgt. Dukes, 46, joined the former Markham Township police department, June 15, 1953. Of the five originals, he is the last. Others of that era were - the late Clarence Wideman, then the Chief; Harvey N. Cox, (April 1, 1951); William H. Shearn, (April 1, 1951) and George M. Clayton (June 15, 1952).

'Dukie', as Sgt. Dukes was known to Buttonville personnel, served in the Merchant Navy during World War II.

The senior officer in actual years, still working within the Buttonville Division is Sgt. Evan Kelley. He joined the force, Nov. 15, 1955.

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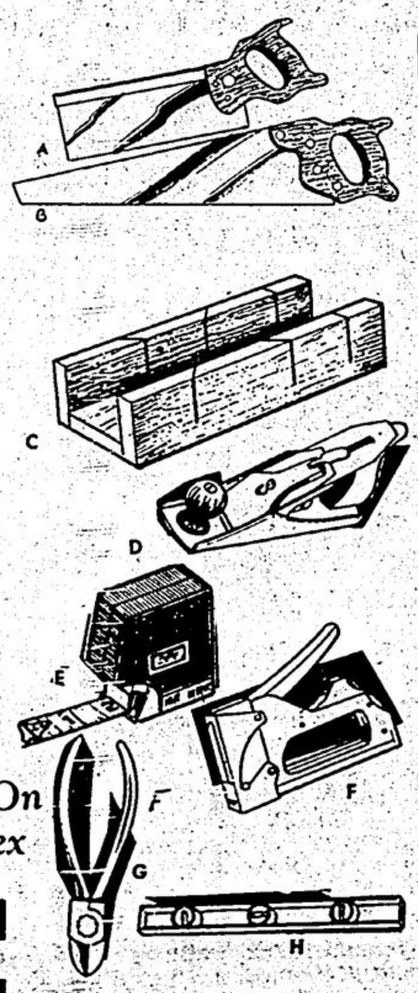

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