

Residents' group seeks expert input for Lafarge hearing

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GUELPH — A neighbourhood group against a proposed commercial development is looking to strengthen its argument by hiring experts and raising funds to pay for them.

The Howitt Park Neighbourhood Residents' Association wants expert opinions from people opposed to proposed development of the former Lafarge lands.

The triangular piece of land is bordered by the Hanlon Expressway and railway lines between Paisley Road and Waterloo Avenue.

A developer asked the city to rezone the land from industrial to commercial and open space but the city rejected the request in June.

But even before the rejection, the developer appealed to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB), arguing the city was taking too long to make a decision.

The city, developer and groups such as the neighbourhood association will try to find common ground through OMB mediation in September.

The neighbourhood association wants to respond to the OMB's questions during mediation by providing expert opinions.

So the association plans to hire a planner by end of month to argue that the size and scale of the proposed development is not a fit for the property.

The association is also seeking a traffic expert to show that traffic from the proposed development would nearly paralyze the neighbourhood streets at peak times.

A lawyer was hired last year to represent the neighbourhood association at the OMB hearing.

It is not yet known how much it will cost for all the expert services, but the neighbourhood association wants its members to join a fundraising group and brainstorm ways of paying.

"I don't think that we can manage those fees so we're going to have to go outside of membership dues to pay for that. So we're going to have to figure some ingenious methods of fundraising," said Ron Foley, president of the neighbourhood association.

Following mediation, a hearing will begin in January if necessary. The OMB could then decide to allow the developer's proposal, despite the City of Guelph's rejection.

OMB meetings concerning the developer's appeal are scheduled for tomorrow and Wednesday.



A TTC 1923 Peterwitt radial car, built in 1963, rolls into the Rockwood station at the Halton County Radial Railway Museum in Milton in this 2007 file photo.

A desire named streetcar

Tess Kalinowski

MILTON — It was built for children. But on a sunny summer afternoon, it's mostly white-haired visitors enjoying the ride down the Milton streetcar museum's 3-kilometre track.

There is at least one boy, though. He is hidden behind the eyes of 73-year-old Bob Johnson.

All the romance of the Halton Radial Railway Museum's vintage streetcar and bus collection — some 150 vehicles in all — lives on in his memory.

His first love, he admits, was steam locomotives. In their youth, he and his brother John would hang about the rail yards, chatting up train crews and cadging rides.

"You can't imagine what it was like riding a locomotive. Everything moved. Everything made noise. They were wonderful," he says. "I come from the time when all this was around. Oh, God, I loved it. (When) I was 20 we got on a train in Orangeville going to Port McNichol. . . . We get off in Galt and there was a three-car electric train sitting waiting to take us down. You can't imagine it. We're going down along the Grand River; Galt, Paris, Brantford, Port Dover — 120 kilometres. The cars were dancing, they were dancing," says Johnson.

The brothers Johnson have been pouring that passion for trains into the Ontario Electric Railway Historical Association for half a century. Founded in 1953, the group is dedicated to preserving a nearly forgotten piece of regional history — a time when streetcar lines and electric railroads ran in and between Guelph, Kitchener, London, Oshawa, Windsor and the Niagara Region.

Though most had died out by 1972, when the museum was founded, streetcars are now enjoying a revival around the world.

But the basic technology behind mass transit on rails has hardly changed in the 100 years since its last renaissance.

In the 1920s, Sunday picnickers could travel by streetcar all the way from the Toronto lakefront to the shores of Lake Simcoe.

"You could take a city streetcar to the corner of Weston Rd. and St. Clair. On the northeast corner was a station (where) you got on an inter-urban streetcar to go to Guelph," Johnson remembers. Inter-urban cars, unlike city cars, had to have toilets.

The electric rail association was born when eight young rail buffs rallied against the TTC's plan to scrap the last of its wooden streetcars. They bought their first vehicle, a 1910 Toronto Railway Car, for \$100.

The next problem was finding a place to store it. They found a kilometre of the old Toronto Suburban Railway right-of-way in Nassawasaya Township, and bought it by paying off about \$300 in back taxes. Since then, they've purchased more property.

The museum now attracts about 15,000 visitors a year. Run on about \$150,000 a year in admission and gift shop sales, it survives mainly on donations, says Caroline Rose, the volunteer marketing manager.

The pride of the museum is the last working inter-urban steel streetcar from London. Built in 1915 but destroyed by fire 10 years later, it was sent to Montreal to have its wood interior rebuilt. Then Johnson and a team of volunteers spent 11 years replacing the fittings and fixtures, down to the brass plates used to strike matches in the smoking compartment.

Also among its vehicles, about 40 of which are operational, are three rare TTC Peter Witt cars — the heavy, noisy trolleys that served Toronto for until 1963.

if you're going
Halton Radial Railway and Museum

Where: 13629 Guelph Line, about 15 kilometres north of Highway 401 on the east side.

Admission: \$9.75 for adults; \$8.50 for seniors and \$7.50 for children 4 to 17.

Open: Seven days a week until the end of August, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

In one of the museum sheds, a yellow snowplow hangs from the side of an old TTC sweeper. Johnson remembers bringing lunch to his father, a TTC operator, and begging to stay aboard to watch the work car clear snow off the track in front of it and plow the lane beside it.

The TTC, he says, has been good to the museum, at one point allowing it to raid the basement of its Hillcrest complex for old parts that can be used to restore the cars.

There are about 300 members of the electric rail association now, about 50 of them "relatively active," according to Rose.

But two of the original eight founders have died and Johnson worries about who will take the place of the old-timers.

"Nobody young's joining," he says. "We have three or four guys in their 30s. . . . We're losing people that have skills."

Rose agrees, although she's optimistic about the museum and the association's future. "It started out . . . as a club. (Now) more people are involved that are not interested in only trains, like myself, they're interested in history, education. Things have evolved."

Mercury news services

Car airbags stolen from dealership

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GUELPH — The driver's side windows were smashed and the airbags professionally removed on 11 Honda Civics at a car dealership, Guelph Police said.

The theft occurred between Friday night and Saturday morning at Olympic Honda on Woodlawn Road West.

All of the Civics were 2008 models.

The theft is estimated at \$8,500 and damage is about \$10,500.

Injuries, charges in two related collisions

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GUELPH — Two accidents that occurred in short succession on the same street as Guelph General Hospital resulted in injuries and charges.

On Friday, a Ford station wagon travelling north on Delhi Street around 4:45 p.m. collided with a Nissan that pulled out of a driveway.

The Nissan's driver, a 43-year-old Guelph man, was charged with failure to yield and his car was significantly damaged on its front end.

The Ford, driven by a 66-year-old Guelph man, was destroyed.

A 36-year-old Guelph woman travelling north on Delhi in a Mitsubishi slammed on her breaks and avoided the collision.

But an Oldsmobile travelling behind her, driven by 40-year-old Guelph man, wasn't able to stop in time and slammed into the back of the Mitsubishi.

Both drivers in the second accident were taken to nearby Guelph General and later released with minor injuries.

The Mitsubishi driver had head and neck injuries, while the Oldsmobile driver had injuries to his right foot.

The Oldsmobile's driver was charged with careless driving, which was demolished in the collision.

The Mitsubishi had significant body damage.

Total damages in the collisions are estimated at \$25,000.

Research leads to fruit with more antioxidants

U of G project grows healthier, locally grown peaches, cherries

Kaitlyn Little

GUELPH — Juicy peaches, sweet cherries and fresh plums are all stone fruits that have become a familiar taste of Ontario summers.

They also happen to be brimming with powerful antioxidants. And many of these fruits would be imported without the work of University of Guelph researchers.

Through various techniques — genetics, selective breeding and biotechnology — researchers have been developing healthier fruit varieties that will flourish in the Canadian climate and markets.

Tree-fruit expert Jayasankar Subramanian, based at the Vineland research station, is one of the researchers involved in the project.

He's focused his efforts on breeding stone fruits that mature earlier and have increased antioxidant properties to tap into growing consumer demand for local foods with health benefits.

"Being able to grow these fruits locally is important to take advantage of the health-promoting com-



A look at University of Guelph research

pounds that are more readily available in the fresh product," Subramanian says.

Antioxidants have been touted for their effect on reducing diseases such as some cancers, Alzheimer's and heart disease. As awareness of antioxidants grows, consumers are looking more to foods to obtain their benefits.

Specifically, Subramanian is leading a research team that has been breeding cherries that can be harvested earlier to help meet demands for local markets and compete with imported U.S. varieties.

The researchers are beginning to notice there's a connection between disease resistance and higher antioxidant levels in cherries.

This connection is also being explored in other stone fruits. Some of the new varieties under development (including a blue plum called

Violette) show high levels of disease resistance and contain two to three times more antioxidants than the standard varieties, Subramanian says.

Fruit breeding is a labour of love, Subramanian says, because many successful varieties take at least 15 to 20 years to develop.

"It takes a lot of fine-tuning," Subramanian says.

"The researchers have to look for and find the varieties that have desirable traits and then keep breeding them together until finally a tree is developed with all the traits together."

Support for this project is provided by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and the Ontario Tender Fruit Producers' Marketing Board.



Eating 20 tart cherries may give 10 times the anti-inflammatory relief of normal Aspirin dosages.



MARTIN SCHWALBE, SPECIAL TO THE MERCURY

Peaches, cherries and plums are brimming with antioxidants and are the focus of University of Guelph Professor Jayasankar Subramanian's research.