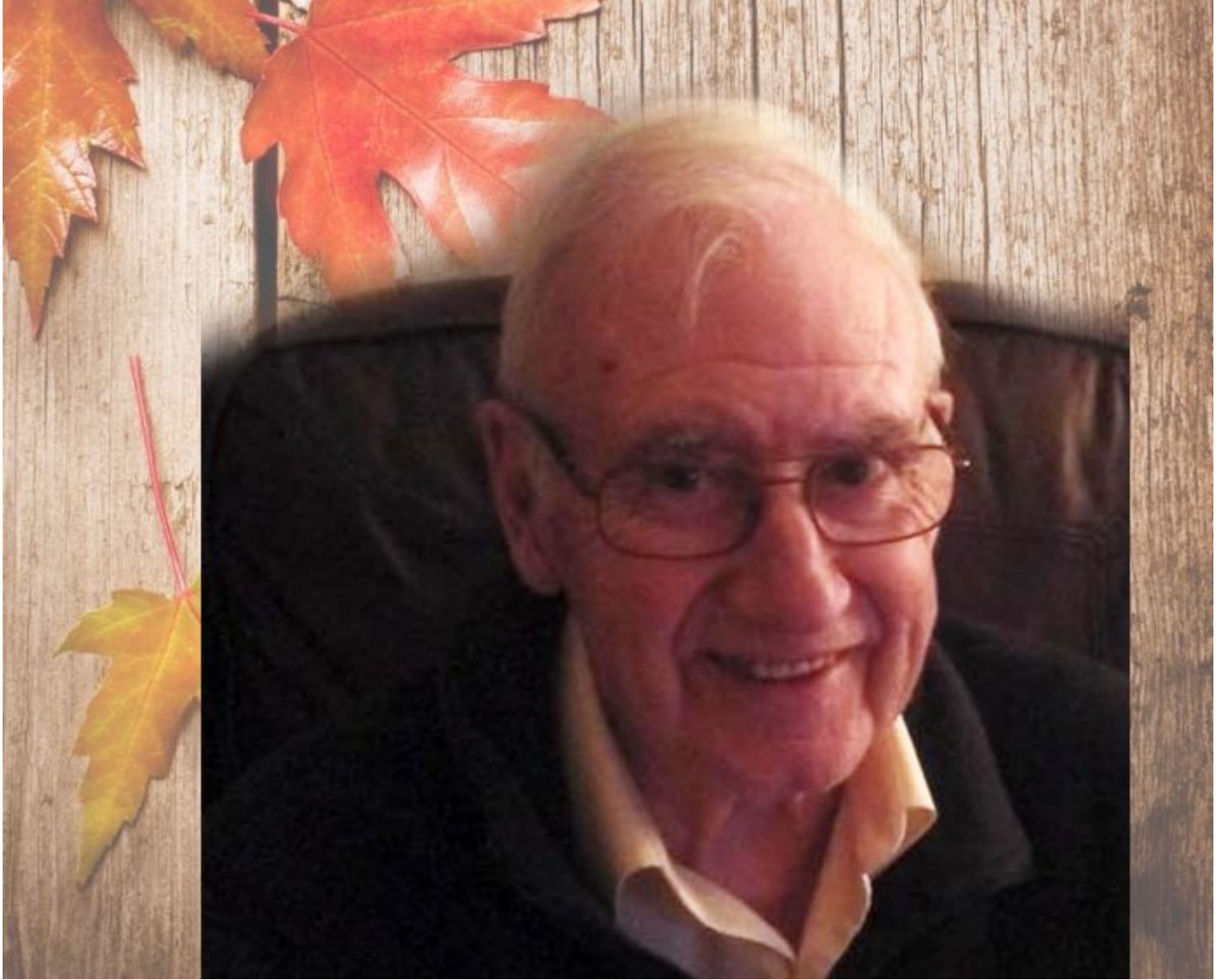


Doug Millroy: Another sorry chapter in this city's history

By **Doug Millroy** - April 14, 2018



Councillors Sandra Hollingsworth and Lou Turco were absent on Feb. 20 when council voted 6-4 on an amendment presented by Councillors Steve Butland and Susan Myers to grandfather Spruce Haven Nature Park into its new Animal Care and Control bylaw, which would ban zoos from within the city.

They were back in their seats Monday night when council voted on a motion by Councillors Butland and Myers to reconsider the amending motion because it had been revealed a wolf had escaped

from the zoo.



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I expected the reconsideration motion to pass as with Butland and Myers changing their vote, the count would come out 6-4 the other way before the votes of Hollingsworth and Turco were taken into account.

On my scorecard I put down Hollingsworth as voting in favour of the reconsideration motion, thinking as a woman she would show more compassion for the animals at the zoo, although that wasn't the case with Myers when she was part of the grandfathering motion. I put down Turco as voting against.

I was dead wrong on Hollingsworth.

The Ward 2 councillor threw in her lot with five councillors from the West End wards, Turco from Ward 4, Marchy Bruni and Frank Fata from Ward 5 and Joe Krmpotich and Ozzie Grandinetti from Ward 6, who were more concerned with protecting a constituent than were with the welfare of the animals.

Conversely, Ward 4 Coun. Rick Niro parted ways with his West End colleagues to vote along with those from the East End, Butland and Paul Christian from Ward 1, Myers from Ward 2 and Judy Hupponen and Matthew Shoemaker from Ward 3.

Hollingsworth may have swallowed the line presented by zoo operator Ken Marshall that the animals would not survive a move, especially Ben the bear who was 31 years old. But his move would have been only for a fairly short distance, to the Aspen Wildlife Centre in Muskoka where, Hupponen says, Zoocheck has offered to pay to have a large enclosure built for him so he can have more room to move in senior years.

The confined space in which the animals at Spruce Haven live, where they can only pace back and forth or in circles, is the major complaint about the zoo.

Lorna Rudolph, a former lawyer who is a volunteer organizer with the Sault Association of Ratepayers, told council the Marshall family has a licence from the Ministry of Natural Resources to keep wild animals and City Solicitor Nuala Kenny agreed provincial law trumped city bylaws.

But it wasn't made clear whether the licence from the MNR specifically allows for the operation of a zoo, or does it just allow the holders of the licence to have wild animals in their care.

After all, when the Marshalls' operation got under way, it took in a lot of rescue and/or injured animals.

Although it appears to be moot now, considering the last vote, I believe, despite Spruce Haven holding a licence from the MNR to keep animals from the wild, that the city still has the right to ban zoos.

But it was obvious Monday night a definitive answer in this regard would have to be found elsewhere.

The new Animal Care and Control Bylaw will have to come back before council for final passage.

Maybe Mayor Christian Provenzano will vote this time around. So far he has declared a pecuniary interest and stepped aside because one of the parties is a former client.

I think the term "former" should take away any thought of conflict. Think about it. How long would a client have to be former to no longer cause a conflict, two years, five years, 10 years?

Come on. Declaring a conflict because one of the parties was a former client is a copout.

Anyway, one way or the other, the next vote should bring to an end another sorry chapter in this city's history.

This battle between animal lovers and the operators of the zoo went well beyond the borders of this city, bringing the kind of unwanted attention that was received with the passage of the infamous language resolution, the statues at the Rhodes Centre that were removed because the mayor

thought pubic hair was evident, and Algoma Public Health hiring a convicted criminal to handle its finances.

Pity

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