

Council Censures Mayor

Fireworks of a different sort than the fireworks expected to signal the start of the winter carnival tonight (Wednesday) erupted near the end of the council meeting Monday night when councillor Jerry O'Rourke rose during the new business portion of the agenda to move a motion of non-confidence against Mayor Dave Richardson.



DAVE RICHARDSON

The motion that "council go on record as expressing non-confidence in the mayor due to the censorable action of the mayor" was quickly seconded and each member of council rose to speak on the motion.

There were two main issues in the debate that followed. One was an interview with the mayor reported in this newspaper two weeks ago under the heading "He'll Fight To Keep Riverview, Riverview." In the story the mayor made several statements which he had pointed out at the beginning of the council meeting were not

quoted exactly but which he would stand behind. The second issue was his statement last week in which he had said "if a study on amalgamation was the lesser of two evils he would support a study."

Richardson later said he was unaware of any move to bring the matter to council as happened at the end of the meeting but he felt he should make an apology at the start of the meeting for the article in the paper which caused some bad feelings.

The mayor had risen before the beginning of the council meeting to apologize to council for any incongruities in the newspaper article of two weeks ago (the one referred to earlier). He said he did not blame the paper although he did not feel the article quoted him exactly as he said. The intent was the same, he said. "I'm sorry for what I said and I publicly apologize for any discomfort the council or public experienced."

However that apology did not change the mood of the council who made their motion at the end of the regular council meeting. O'Rourke noted his motion came after he had carefully listened to the other councillors and noted their opinion. "Morale is low, the lowest ever," he said. "Never in 14 years of being on council have I seen such a total disregard for council and the people by a mayor."

He accused the mayor of not listening to the majority and of criticizing those who do. "You are out of touch with the councillors and out of touch with the people," he said if you feel anyone in town

agrees with a study on amalgamation. He also told the mayor he did not listen to the majority who were against any change in their lifestyle. "The decision was taken against a downtown in the central area of Riverview and you must accept that fact and stop trying to change it," O'Rourke said.

Then one after another the rest of council rose. Councillor Tressa Lewis told Richardson she fully supported the motion as she could not respect anyone who goes to the media instead of going to



JERRY O'ROURKE

council. She said she had never heard of a NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) Association and she did not belong to one and resented the inference that she did. She added she certainly did not support a study on amalgamation.

Councillor Dave Cudmore then said he was not happy with the treatment the council had received from the mayor but he noted the mayor had already publicly apologized. He said he could understand that political figures could be misquoted a lot but he

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No Confidence In Mayor

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was still unhappy about the article.

Councillor Dean Johnston said he felt he represented the concerns of all the voters in Ward 3. He pointed out council must go on record as having lost confidence in the mayor and as having lost respect in the office.

He said he was upset with several reports that had quoted the mayor as saying "I make the decisions" and he suggested the mayor review his duties which Johnston said were to chair council meetings, promote the town and make announcements on the decision of council.

"We (council) may have to change the duties of mayor if these actions continue," Johnston said.

He said he was not in favour of amalgamation and he felt the council should send a letter to Fredericton to tell them Riverview was against a study of amalgamation.

Councillor Joan Fawcett said she was elected by the people and had listened to the people. Statements to the contrary were an insult to the residents as well as council, he continued, she asked the mayor when council was going to discuss the report from the committee on downtown development. "There were some good recommendations in the report," she said, and she asked for an immediate meeting to discuss it. She accused the mayor of delaying discussion of the report.

Councillor Debby Warren said she was not impressed (with the statements made by the mayor). "We (councillors) were chosen by the people and work on behalf of the whole town," she said. She told Richardson the mayor was the spokesman of council and nothing more.

On the matter of amalgamation she said she and others don't want amalgamation and won't support a study of amalgamation. The rights of the citizens must be upheld, she said. "We have a quiet, clean community and we want it to stay that way, she continued. "If you want a downtown then move to Moncton."

While Councillor Casley said he supported the motion before council, he said he hoped council and the mayor could learn to work together to serve the community. The mayor then asked Deputy Mayor Dean Johnston to take the chair so he could answer the charges made. He said that while he had not written down all the points made he did feel he could answer the most prominent ones. He began by telling councillor Fawcett that the study would be discussed as soon as the person in municipal affairs was available to

attend the meeting. It's taking time because the person is only working part time now, he said, but we must have the facts from Fredericton before we can discuss the matter. He said he hoped Fredericton would come quickly.

He told council that the term NIMBY was not coined by himself and he had already publicly apologized for using the term. And the case of the downtown was closed. However he warned council amalgamation keeps coming up and it must be addressed. The discussion was not initiated by me, he said, you know my stand on it.

Riverview has a great future he pointed out, adding if I didn't think so I wouldn't be here. "I'm not in favour of a study," he said, "but I'd rather know what is going on than wake up one morning to find it's happened." He said a bedroom community cannot continue to exist and the residents cannot continue to pay ever increasing taxes. The money has to come from somewhere and we must either raise taxes again and again or find another tax base, he said.

The mayor said he agreed with Casley that council was at a turning point and he hoped they would learn to work together. He asked council if they would reinitiate board meetings (on Mondays to give councillors a chance to get information and exchange ideas. We are running at \$7 million operation and we must meet, he said, adding a previous attempt for such meetings had met with some degree of success.

He said he hoped the meeting and motion would clear the air and allow council to get on with the job. "I make a full and public apology," he summed up.

He later said he felt the mayor's job was 75% promotion of the community and 25% catalyst of a team approach on council. I feel I have failed to get council to work together, he said, but, he promised, I will work on that.

With that council called for the vote which passed unanimously.

After the meeting O'Rourke noted the council had not asked for and did not expect the resignation of the mayor. "He has a great deal of potential," O'Rourke said. "He

has a lot to give the community and we don't want him to quit."

He called the entire motion and discussion unprecedented in the 15 years of Riverview's existence as a town. But he was not surprised the motion was unanimous. "O'Rourke noted the articles were simply a continuation of what has been happening over the past period of months and were not alone responsible for the action taken by council at the meeting.