



1988: Hospital accumulates unexpected savings

JIM QUANTRELL, AT A GLANCE

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Cambridge archivist Jim Quantrell takes our readers back for a glance at events which occurred 10, 15 and 20 years ago.

EVENTS FROM 1988

Second week of October

Officials at Cambridge Memorial Hospital announced that over the previous five months the hospital had accumulated an unexpected saving of \$88,000 between April and August by spending less on providing services to the community. The savings did not reflect any cut in services and since they were unplanned it was uncertain exactly how the savings were achieved. One of the factors that undoubtedly contributed to the windfall was a somewhat lower than average utilization of the hospital's services by the community over the April to August period. In addition the patient days percentage occupancy had decreased by almost six per cent over the previous April to August period and the average length of stay for a patient had decreased by 2.6 per cent. While the savings were a pleasant surprise for this budget year it was unlikely that the hospital could expect a repeat in the following years.

Cambridge council decided to allow the mayor to attend and contribute to management committee meetings despite some fears that she might have an "undue influence" on city staff and the decision making process. The city's management committee consisted of the chief administrative officer and the city department heads and met once a week to review and co-ordinate recommendations and reports destined for general committee or council. While discussion between department heads and the mayor and councillors was a regular part of council business, elected officials had been "highly discouraged" from participating in staff meetings. As a consequence the mayor noted that when some recommendations and reports from staff arrived at the council table for discussion she sometimes felt she didn't have enough information to adequately handle the discussion. She felt that the then current policy of one-on-one meetings between department heads and the mayor was proving inadequate because conflicts in scheduling made meetings difficult to arrange.

A consultant hired by the city to conduct a transit feasibility study came back to council with the opinion that the then existing bus terminal should be shut down as quickly as possible and replaced by a safer and more up-to-date facility. The consultant noted that the Mill Street terminal had too many buses, too little room, and too much conflicting traffic from both Ainslie Street and a nearby city parking lot to operate safely. Council agreed with the assessment of the existing facilities but declined to authorize a \$29,500 contract that would have seen the consultant find a location for a new Cambridge Transit bus terminal. Instead they decided to first consider the options that might be available in the existing terminal.

EVENTS FROM 1993

Second week of October

It appeared inevitable that Cambridge Memorial Hospital would have to lay off staff in the near future to meet cost cutting measures imposed by the province's social contract. Department heads had been asked to trim budgets by two per cent in order to help the hospital deal with the loss of more than \$1.5 million imposed by the social contract. As officials in each of the hospital's departments attempted to share the loss of 19.3 full-time equivalent positions it appeared that in spite of cost reductions to be made in other parts of the hospital's operations four full jobs would be lost.

Cambridge's planning and development committee opted to designate a heritage property on Fraser Street thus scuttling plans for the redevelopment of the site. The owner of the property had declared that unless his overall plan for the site was approved he would not follow through with much needed upgrades to three rows of townhouses already on the site. Tenants of those apartments asked that the committee not bow to the developer's threats and requested that the stone house on the property that had once belonged to city industrialist John Goldie be preserved through a heritage designation.

EVENTS FROM 1998

Second week of October

Two days after the provincial government legislated some school boards back to work, elementary public school teachers in Waterloo Region took their case to the streets and gathered in front of Cambridge MPP Gerry Martiniuk's constituency office. A spokesperson for the teachers noted that this action was the first step in a campaign of rotating strikes for the region. The teachers believed that the strike action would not go on for long however. "We hope they (the school board) will settle today and we won't have to be out," he commented.

It was announced that Com Dev's Space Group had won a \$7.1-million production contract for a new naval radar early warning system. Under the contract from a company based in the Netherlands Com Dev was to manufacture switching systems for Active Phased Array Radar (APAR) systems, a sophisticated multi-functional naval radar system capable of detecting and tracking between 250 and 350 objects around a ship simultaneously.

After months of reconstruction the new and improved downtown, complete with trees, brickwork and "bump-outs", was officially unveiled for shoppers and merchants. The new landscape of the downtown core was a joint project of the city and the region. The city spent \$150,000 on streetscaping while the overall project cost about \$1.2 million. The streetscaping reduced on-street parking on Main Street between Wellington and Water streets by about one-third but it created a more pedestrian oriented venue. Included in the streetscaping were wider sections of sidewalks at key locations to accommodate sidewalk cafes and special events.

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Jim Quantrell, archivist City of Cambridge Archives

46 Dickson St. Cambridge 740-4680, ext. 4610

quantrellj@city.cambridge.on.ca

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