This page was exported from - Caledon Citizen
Export date: Thu Mar 28 11:00:37 2024 / +0000 GMT

Aquatics facility still slated for SouthFields Village

By Bill Rea

The issue of which phase of the Mayfield West development should get an aquatics facility has not gone away.

Indeed, Councillor Barb Shaughnessy was able to get her colleagues to deal with a motion to reconsider the decision last Tuesday night. It required a two-thirds majority to get the matter on the table, and council voted unanimously to discuss it. But the motion also needed a two-thirds majority to pass, so it was unsuccessful when it came to a vote.

Council late last year reversed the position taken in committee and approved an option for a community centre in the first phase of Mayfield West that would see an aquatics facility. That was approved by a split vote, and there was heated debate before the motion was passed. One of the issues raised was two councillors were absent. Councillor Doug Beffort was away due to illness and Councillor Annette Groves had been called away to deal with a family matter.

But there is still lots of concern with the move, especially among people who believe residents in the northern areas of town are under served when it comes to pools. The facility near Caledon village was closed a couple of years ago, and there are currently no plans to replace it.

Ward 1 resident Cheri Cowan made a presentation complete with questions for various councillors.

One of the issues she raised dealt with her concern the decision to have the facility in the first phase was not reached in an open manner that allowed for input from the public.

She also pointed out there has been a long-time call to have some aquatic facility in Caledon East. Cowan said a petition with some 450 signatures was presented to council Jan. 22, 2013 calling for a therapeutic pool at the Caledon Community complex. She asked if there was ever a staff report on this request.

A similar request was made in 2015 as part of the Parks and Recreation Visioning exercise. Cowan said that request was forwarded to the planning committee of council, and she asked if there was ever an update from the committee.

Addressing the decision to put a facility in the first phase of Mayfield West, Cowan pointed out there had been renovations to the Mayfield Recreation Complex, which is close to where the proposed facility will go, and she asked if there's been any effort to replace the pool near Caledon village.

She also raised the issue that council went against the advice of Town staff and consultants when it favoured a facility in the first phase of the development. She wondered if council values staff's opinions and wondered about the point of hiring consultants if their opinions don't matter.

Cowan pointed out members of the Town's Senior Task Force had been involved in the previous discussions, but had not been aware of the final motion that came up at council at the last minute. They expressed concerns to staff, and were told council's not obligated to consult the task force.

She wondered what the point was of having a task force.

Cowan pointed out the discussions at council dealt with options, known as A and B. That would have been confusing to residents unless they had the staff reports in front of them.

?This has become a very complex, detailed issue,? Terra Cotta resident John Rutter observed, as he asked council to reconsider the ?questionable conduct? that led to the Dec. 20 decision.

?We are not against the planned community hub centre, which has been scheduled for SouthFields since its conception,? he said. ?It's the recently-added pool component which we are opposing.?

He also pointed out that putting a pool into this facility will mean there won't be room for other amenities that some people had been counting on, such as a gym and indoor walking track.

Rutter said he's heard from people in the community who have indicated they would not have time to use a pool. He referred to another man who uses the indoor track at the Caledon Centre for Recreation and Wellness (CCRW) in Bolton, and he said the facility is congested and the track is poorly designed. He's been looking forward to using the track at the new facility.

He also heard there are people desiring meeting facilities at the new centre. As well, he said there have been people who expressed the desire for a prayer room.

Rutter referred to a new aquatics centre due to open at Gore Meadows Community Centre in Brampton, and that should attract people who currently use the pool at the Mayfield Recreation Complex.

He also wondered if the need for a pool is driven by population, and he asked Councillor Johanna Downey what numbers she thought justified a pool.

?This SouthFields pool seems to be such a passionate issue with you,? Rutter told her. ?You promote it as being a win-win for Ward

2, as well as Caledon as a whole.?
He wondered why her fellow Ward 2 councillor Gord McClure voted against the pool going in the first phase.
He also commented that the motion Downey successfully put forth at the Dec. 20 meeting was the same one that had been previously defeated at committee.
?Why did you bring forward the exact same amendment at this time that was defeated just a week ago at committee?? he asked Downey. ?I am unaware of anything having changed. You have not presented council with any earth-shattering news or revelations.?
He suggested it might have had something to do with Groves being called away at the last minute.
?Perception and public opinion is that you saw an opportunity and you took advantaged of it,? he said.
Addressing issues of money, Rutter observed that about $88,000 has been spent for four reports; two from staff and two from consultants. All four concluded it was not the time or place for approving a pool.
?I have seen councillors pick through reports before and highlighting paragraphs or sentences which they would like staff to clarify or tweak,? he observed, ?but I have never seen the recommendations of four reports be totally ignored.?
Mayor Allan Thompson told Rutter the $88,000 was for reports that looked recreation matters throughout Caledon.
Groves told Rutter she would have voted against Downey's amendment, had she been at the meeting. McClure added he was not pleased that a motion defeated at committee was passed at council.
?I was very upset about that,? he said.
Shaughnessy cited a consultant's report from October that said the pool at Mayfield is at about 78 per cent capacity, and that about half the users are from outside Caledon and most of them would probably stop coming once Gore Meadows opens.
The proposed facility did have some supporters from the community in attendance.
SouthFields Village residents Ken Bokor and Louis Liu were on hand representing the Village Centre Liaison Group.
Bokor said they were asked by the Town in 2015 to help provide residents' input on the issue. They helped organize an online survey which drew almost 3,000 responses. People were asked to prioritize what amenities they wanted to see in the facility, and a pool and fitness centre topped the list.
Lui pointed out development charges were collected on the houses in the first phase, and he understood some of that money was to be dedicated to a community centre.
He also said he's vice-chair of the local student council, and they were told a couple of weeks ago that about 1,000 more students are going to be moving to the area. That will fill the new proposed school for the village.
Shaughnessy pointed out the pool at the Mayfield complex is about a five-minute drive from SouthFields, yet it's 40 minutes for many of her Ward 1 constituents.
?What's wrong with driving five minutes?? she asked.
Bokor agreed there will be disappointed people, no matter what's decided.
SouthFields resident Ilijana Cukjak said an overwhelming number of residents want the pool in the first phase.
Cukjak also observed there were two options presented at committee, and Downey's motion lost on a tie vote. But she was able to present it again at council, and it passed. She asserted the process was open and transparent.
As well, she said the Mayfield pool might be close by, but not close enough to be conducive to use by Mayfield West residents.
Cukjak also pointed to a lack of services in Caledon, with Mayfield West residents having to go to Brampton or Orangeville. She charged taxes have been increasing over the last seven years, but there's been no corresponding sign that services have been increasing.
In addition, she said there will eventually be four schools in the area, and each of them have gyms that could be available for community use. But Groves pointed out school boards have changed their policies, and it's not as easy now for community groups to use these facilities.
Geoffrey Gow represented the board of Dorado Stars Swim Club. He said the club has young swimmers who compete at the highest levels, and they are looking forward to seeing the new facility taking some of the pressure and demand off the Mayfield pool.
Groves told him the Gore Meadows pool will free up some space. Gow agreed it will have an impact, but it was hard to say how much.
Bolton resident Sandra Forester said she helped raise funds for the pool at CCRW.
She charged it was unreasonable that council voted to approve a new pool with two councillors absent when the newly renovated pool at Mayfield is nearby. She said there are many in Caledon who don't have easy access to any pool, but SouthFields Village residents will be able to walk to their's. She also pointed out the pool near Caledon village was closed a couple of years ago, and she

argued that's where the next one should go.
Downey pointed out these discussions involved only a pool going somewhere in Ward 2.
?We need it in the north end,? Forester countered. ?We are under serviced.?