

Mayor explains his vote on pool

In reviewing the comments and questions raised recently at the Caledon council meeting and as a result of the recent decision regarding the Mayfield West Recreation Centre, it is clear to me that they relate to three main themes: council procedure, council decision making, and how this affects other communities in Caledon.

Council Procedural Bylaw

I'm the first one to admit that council process can be confusing. Motions, amendments to motions, amendments to amendments, when can you debate, when can't you and why the two third rule.

All of this is laid out in our Procedural Bylaw ? the language is legal and not easy to understand, so here are the ?Coles Notes? using the Mayfield West Recreation Centre decision as an example:

Dec. 13, 2016 General Committee: Report on the Mayfield West Recreation Centre Design Concept Update was debated and voted on by Committee to adopt option A. It's important to know that the decisions at General Committee are not final because it is at council meetings that decisions are either adopted, reversed or amended.

Dec. 20, 2016 Council meeting: A motion to adopt the recommendations of Dec. 13 General Committee is tabled ? then an amendment to that motion is put forward to remove Option A and replace it with Option B ? then an amendment to the amendment is put forward that the matter be referred back to staff.

In accordance with Section 10.3 of the Procedural Bylaw, council introduced a motion to call the question on the amendment to the amendment ? the motion (to refer back to staff) failed.

So now council goes back to the first amendment to the original motion which is to remove Option A and replace it with Option B ? the motion is carried by a recorded vote of 4-3 ? following this, the original motion (as amended) is voted on and again a recorded vote is called. It is carried 4-3.

March 7, 2016: Council votes to unanimously to waive the rules of the Procedural Bylaw to allow for another motion on the option of the Mayfield West Community Centre. It's important to note that in order to reverse a previous decision by council, it must pass by a two-thirds majority of the members present. In the case of this meeting, that meant six people would have to vote in favour. A recorded vote was called and four were opposed four were in favour ? motion failed.

As Mayor, I have some discretion with how meetings are run. Although I was not able, in accordance with our Procedural Bylaw, to allow for council to re-debate the issue, I was able to give additional time for every member of the public to voice their opinions. I did this because I respect others' opinions, whether I agree with them or not.

Council Debate and Decision Making

Every member of council brings their own perspectives and methods of decision making to the council table. I can't speak for others, but I can share how I approach this.

My role as a member of Town council is to represent the public and to consider the well-being and interests of the municipality. As Mayor, I have to look at this from a Caledon-as-a-whole perspective.

Staff's role is to implement the policies set out by council and to provide advice and guidance. I greatly respect our staff at the Town and I rely on their expertise and their professional advice every day. That does not mean that I simply rubber stamp every recommendation. When considering community needs and concerns, it takes a balance between staff's professional expertise and recommendation, and council's understanding of this community.

For the Mayfield West Recreation Centre I did the following:

I carefully reviewed the council report and asked staff how they came up with the two options. The fact that two options were provided meant there was merit in both.

Then, I reviewed the consultant's report, the terms of reference and scope of work they were retained to complete. I also asked the consultant directly whether the conclusions would be the same if he was looking at a lifestyle pool. The answer was that was not in their scope of work. The lifestyle pool planned for Mayfield West cannot be compared to an aquatics facility like the existing Mayfield pool; different facility for different purposes. It would be like saying that because we have baseball diamonds in one community they shouldn't also get a soccer pitch.

Then I heard from the residents of SouthFields Village ? more than 200 of them.

My decision was based on my due diligence and respecting the needs of the majority of residents in a community.

I respect that other members of council have a different perspective and used other methods in making their decisions.

How does this affect other communities in Caledon?

There is a rumour being spread that a pool for the Southfield community means no pool for Caledon East or Caledon village. I feel

strongly that the opposite is true, that a lifestyle pool in Southfield is model for other communities in Caledon and here's why. This isn't a numbers game. If it were, Caledon village would never, ever have a pool because they'll never have the population to support it. Here's what Caledon village does have: residents who are community and business leaders, innovative thought leaders who I know care deeply about their village. I would love to see the same effort that went into opposing a project in another Caledon community, be refocused toward creative options for their community.

Remember, we are not talking about big pools or aquatics facilities. We are talking about lifestyle pools that are efficient, cost effective and appeal to a broader range of the community.

We have completed Phases 1 and 2 of the Caledon Community Complex in Caledon East. The planning for Phase 3 is underway and Wards 3 and 4 Councillors Innis and deBoer are meeting with staff and will be reaching out to residents this spring. This is similar to the process undertaken by the Ward 2 Councillors Downey and McClure.

Rigorous debate and community engagement is healthy and democratic. What isn't healthy is when one community is pitted against another, when misinformation is shared, or when some members of council just can't respect the opinion of other members.

Council has made a decision for Mayfield West. As Mayor, I am looking ahead and will continue to work with residents and council to serve the interests of all of our communities.

Allan Thompson,
Mayor, Town of Caledon