

Additional Open House and Public Meeting to be held for Site Alteration By-law

By Riley Murphy

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

At the most recent General Committee meeting of Caledon Council, two motions were brought forward regarding the Site Alteration By-law.

The Site Alteration By-law has been a topic on the community's mind for months. This by-law will repeal and replace the Town's Current Fill By-law.

It aims to regulate the placement/removal of vegetation, topsoil, fill and/or grading or drainage alterations on private lands, in addition to outlining requirements for studies, permits, public notice, enforcement, and compliance with other federal, provincial, or regulatory agencies.

After an Open House held in October, residents have continued to voice concerns over the by-law and have further questions.

Both Councillor Mario Russo and Councillor Christina Early tabled motions regarding further public consultation for the proposed by-law.

‘We’ve gotten some public interest on this issue. It’s something that I think is important enough for the Town to take a little bit of time and digest. I wanted to bring this motion forward so that we essentially direct staff to give the public some more time to digest and have some more meaningful dialogue and consultation,’ said Russo.

Domenica D’Amico, Commissioner of Engineering, added that not only have residents asked for further consultation, but also for the opportunity to participate in a focus group.

She later added, ‘the focus group will be used to present and discuss the changes that we have made as a result of the public feedback that we have received to date.’

During the meeting, the advantages and disadvantages of holding a second open house were discussed.

Councillor Christina Early said although the previous open house was well managed and moderated, there was a ‘small timeline,’ as well as a set start and end time.

‘I think we would like to see it in Chambers; we would like to see an actual public meeting,’ said Early.

Councillor Lynn Kiernan echoed this point, saying they want to give the public ‘every opportunity.’

Councillors noted the benefits of a public meeting as opposed to an open house; public meetings are streamed, and therefore the community can participate both online and in person.

It was also noted that the community has expressed a desire to see comments on the by-law made publicly available.

‘The intent is that we will publish the updated Site Alteration By-law with an accompanying comment tracker, for lack of a better word, that thematically captures the comments that we have received to date,’ explained D’Amico.

Councillor Russo and Early’s motions were combined and approved, illustrating that the public consultation and engagement

strategy will include a resident focus group comprised of 5 to 6 community members with previously expressed interest.

Staff will use the Focus Group to discuss the detailed changes to the bylaw resulting from public feedback.

The motion explains that the Town will concurrently post the revised Site Alteration By-law on the Town's website for public review.

It was also decided in the combined motion that Town staff will hold an additional Open House and Public Meeting to maximize opportunities for the public to continue asking questions and providing feedback, with 20 days' notice in accordance with the Town's Public Notice By-law.

The motion was unanimously approved and will return to Council for the January 27 Council meeting for final ratification.