

Council approves working group on aggregate

By Bill Rea

The Town of Caledon is going to be setting up a body to look into aggregate issues and related matters, but it's not the kind of group that Councillor Barb Shaughnessy was hoping to see.

Councillors debated at some length Tuesday night before going along with the recommendation from Town staff to set up a working group.

There had been previous talk of setting up a committee, and Town staff had reported there are provisions for such committees in the Official Plan. But they also pointed out the definition of 'committee' is somewhat loose in that document, and they argued the main intent of those provisions was to create a forum for public and stakeholder input.

The staff report stated an aggregate committee has never been formed because the areas of focus that the Official Plan envisioned for it, such as progress of extraction, compliance with the conditions of the licence, rehabilitation, noise, truck traffic, social and economic impact, etc., are matters that are outside the jurisdiction of the Town. They are the responsibility of Provincial authorities. 'In short, the Town has no authority to regulate the operations of aggregate pits and quarries,' the staff report stated.

Staff suggested a forum to provide public and stakeholder input that is open to anyone (in compliance with the Planning Act), focused on matters the Town or Peel Region has the authority to address, and allows for opportunities for stakeholder engagement. The report also argued the membership of a committee or task force would be limited and closed. A working group, however, would provide for a more open forum, with no one being excluded or given a privileged position; create the chance to address current and upcoming issues, like the recycling of aggregate, air quality, noise, etc.; involve the skills and expertise of people in the community and industry; and make that input available to the Town.

Shaughnessy was not satisfied with the recommendation, nor was she impressed with the way it was brought forward. She said about 95 per cent of the aggregate in Caledon is in her ward (Ward 1), yet she had no prior knowledge this report was coming forward to Tuesday's meeting until she saw the agenda.

'As a council member, I feel blindsided,' she said. 'I find it extremely disappointing.'

Shaughnessy added this is the most important issue in her ward. Several of her constituents have seen the report, and she didn't receive one positive comment back.

'Ward 1 expects more,' she declared. 'Ward 1 deserves more.'

Shaughnessy put forth a motion to have the matter referred back to staff for more information. It also called on staff to invite interested stakeholders to a meeting no later than May 31 to discuss different committee structures to get input on aggregate matters and to report back to council by June 11.

The motion didn't carry when it came time for the vote.

'Nobody contacted me to ask my opinion,' Shaughnessy charged, adding people who have to live with the aggregate issues need to be engaged on this.

'This report is a slap in the face to my residents and Ward 1,' she later commented.

But Mayor Allan Thompson argued that what Shaughnessy was seeking was actually covered in the staff report, adding the recommendation was a way of bringing the issues to the table. He added his only problem with the report was it didn't go far enough in addressing air-quality issues.

While he wasn't there for the discussion, former councillor Ian Sinclair had submitted written comments on the staff recommendation (a copy of which was obtained by the Citizen). He pointed out the formation of a standing aggregate advisory committee came from recommendations of the Caledon Community Resource Study (CCRS) and that survived long negotiations.

'The recommendations were not formed lightly,' he stated.

Sinclair was also not impressed with the notion of staff setting up an ad-hoc committee of residents to comment on aggregate issues. Councillor Annette Groves said she was guided by Sinclair's comments, observing he is very familiar with the aggregate industry.

'We need to get this going, but we need to get it right,' she declared.

But Councillor Johanna Downey agreed with Thompson that what Shaughnessy was seeking was covered in the report.

'It seems pretty simple,' she observed, adding that as a member of the community, she would be reluctant to sit as a stakeholder on a group that has no jurisdiction.

Councillor Rob Mezzapelli wasn't upset that Shaughnessy wasn't consulted about the report. He said councillors shouldn't have influence over the way staff does their job, adding he doesn't want influence over reports dealing with his ward.