

Council briefed on impacts of Strong Mayor powers

By **ZACHARY ROMAN**

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Caledon's Mayor was granted Strong Mayor powers by the Provincial Government on July 1.

On October 24, Caledon's acting Town Solicitor Matthew Binkle made a presentation to Council detailing the scope of these powers.

Strong Mayors can appoint a municipality's Chief Administrative Officer (CAO). This is the person who has general control and management of the affairs of a municipality.

Mayor Annette Groves exercised this power on August 2 when she replaced Caledon's former CAO Carey Herd with current CAO Nathan Hyde.

Strong Mayors can also determine the organizational structure of a municipality.

On October 5, Groves delegated this power to Hyde by way of a mayoral decision. Delegation of certain powers is permitted under the legislation that introduced Strong Mayor powers.

Before the October 5 mayoral decision, in September, the organizational structure of Caledon was changed. A September 19 Town press release announced streamlining of the municipality from 11 departments to six.

Strong Mayors can appoint chairs and vice-chairs of local boards prescribed by regulation. However, Binkle noted in his presentation that no local boards are currently prescribed, so this specific Strong Mayor power has no impact in Caledon at this time.

Strong Mayors can establish or dissolve committees of Council and assign their chairs, vice-chairs and functions.

Strong Mayors can use their powers to advance the Provincial Government's priorities, chief of which is the building of 1.5 million new homes by 2031. They can do this by bringing matters forward for consideration at Council, or bringing by-laws forward for consideration and vote at Council.

In the case of a Strong Mayor bringing forward a by-law, they would only need one-third of Council in support of it for it to pass.

Strong Mayors also have the ability to veto by-laws that are deemed to interfere with provincial priorities.

To do so, they must provide written notice of intent to consider a veto within two days of a by-law's passing. Within 14 days, they must provide a written document that includes the veto and reasons for it. Within 21 days after Council receives a written veto document from the Mayor, Council may overturn the veto with a two-thirds vote.

Binkle's presentation notes that Strong Mayors can propose and adopt a budget.

After receiving the proposed budget, Council may make an amendment to the proposed budget, the presentation reads. The Mayor may veto budget amendments. Council may override the Mayor's veto if two-thirds of the members of Council vote to override the veto.

After Binkle's presentation was complete, Regional Councillor Mario Russo asked if staff could brief Council on situations where Strong Mayor powers have been used in other municipalities.

Binkle said he was able to find 24 municipalities who have posted use of Strong Mayor powers. He said he could collect information on what other Heads of Council have been doing with the powers and bring information back to Council.

Regional Councillor Christina Early asked if Caledon's budget process is changing at all now that Strong Mayor powers are in effect.

Hyde said Caledon's budget process will continue as it has in previous years.

Early then asked if Caledon's CAO is required to report to Council or just the Mayor. Binkle said the CAO should still be reporting to Council as a whole.

Early's last question surrounded statutory positions, such as Town Clerk and Integrity Commissioner. Binkle said Strong Mayor powers cannot be used to deal with the hiring/termination process for these positions.

Ward 4 Councillor Nick de Boer asked when a schedule for Caledon's 2024 budget process would be revealed.

Hyde said staff is working diligently on the budget and that a draft of it is complete. He said more detailed information on it will be coming to Council shortly.