

Democracy Caledon to host meeting on Mayor's housing decision

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A group of Caledon residents are concerned about a recent mayoral decision.

Democracy Caledon, a volunteer group made up of citizens with a long record of civic engagement, is planning to host a citizens' forum at 6 p.m. on April 17 at St. James Anglican Church in Caledon East (6025 Old Church Road). All are welcome to attend.

There, they will discuss Mayor Annette Groves' March 26 decision to advance zoning bylaws for 12 development applications slated to bring 35,000 housing units to Caledon over time.

Groves issued the decision using her provincially-appointed Strong Mayor powers. There will be a single public meeting held by the Town about the 12 applications on April 25. They will then come to Caledon Council at its April 30 meeting, where they will be approved if one-third of Councillors support Groves' decision.

In a written statement, Democracy Caledon volunteers said the decision is an affront to the democratic process and good planning.

'Caledon is at a pivotal crossroads and its residents are on the precipice of losing any say in how the Town is planned and governed,' said the volunteers.

Debbe Crandall, a member of Democracy Caledon, said the group felt they had to speak up after Groves' recent decision.

'This advanced rezoning, I'm calling it a Strong Mayor's zoning order,' said Crandall. 'It cuts out all public consultation? it's so worrying.'

Crandall said she's very concerned the applications can be approved if only one third of Councillors support them.

'We have to stand up and say to Mayor Groves, 'this is not right',' said Crandall.

She said she hopes the upcoming citizens' forum will get people talking about the recent mayoral decision and sharing the news with their friends and family. Crandall said Democracy Caledon wants to get as many people engaged as possible.

'If we fill that Council chamber and get enough people asking questions, maybe, just maybe, (Groves) might say, 'We're rushing things too much here',' said Crandall. 'What's the rush? Please explain to us why you are doing this.'

In their statement, Democracy Caledon volunteers said there are many unsettling questions that remain unanswered as a result of Groves' decision.

'At stake here is not just that these developments will proceed with little citizen input, but that Mayor Groves is willing to use these Strong Mayor powers in the first place,' they said.

Democracy Caledon volunteers said the purpose of their April 17 forum is to create awareness of Groves' decision, move people to action, and present options that might be able to influence Caledon Council's decision on the 12 applications. There will also be a question-and-answer session at the forum.

'This is a critical issue of concern to all residents, no matter what part of Caledon they live in,' said Democracy Caledon volunteers

in their statement. ?If Strong Mayor powers can be used to push through development in one area, those same powers can be used in other areas.?

Groves previously told The Citizen she made the decision to get ahead of growth and take a proactive approach to development.

Town of Caledon staff said Groves' decision is expected to expedite planning procedures by one to two years for the 12 development applications, which are generally in the areas of Mayfield West, Tullamore, Alloo, Wildfield and Bolton.

?This is to streamline the process? having said that, this is not a final approval? there are holding provisions within the bylaws,? said Groves, adding the development applications will still have to go through a secondary planning process.

The Town's public meeting about the applications is being held at 7 p.m. on April 25 and residents can attend it online at caledon.ca or in person at Caledon Town Hall (6311 Old Church Road).