

Editorial ? Don't be too quick to judge

Last week's quarterly meeting of the SouthFields Village Residents' Group included some information of a proposal by Monarch Plastics Ltd. (MPL) to build a large facility in the area where Kennedy Road intersects with Highway 410. Actually, the word 'proposal' is possibly misleading. Information that came out during last week's presentation indicated that Monarch has already bought the property, and that it is zoned and designated for prestige industrial development (Mayor Allan Thompson later said those classifications have been in place for more than six years). That means there will be no need for the usual public information meeting, which is normally required when there's an application for a rezoning or amendment to the Town's Official Plan. That doesn't necessarily mean this is a done deal. A site plan for the property still has to be approved, meaning things like accommodation of trucks and the manufacturing operation on the property will have to be addressed and dealt with, as well as visual factors like parking, berms, landscaping, setbacks and a host of other issues. At least one municipal official we talked to wondered if all the proposed and required amenities can fit on the property. But that remains to be seen.

What is relevant right now is people living nearby have concerns, and they have every right to feel that way. After all, this issue has come up rather suddenly. Kenneth Bokor, who was chairing the meeting last week, said he had only learned about it about 10 days before. And the politicians who were there (Thompson and Councillors Johanna Downey and Gord McClure) evidently had roughly the same notice.

These elected officials came in for some heat over that last week, with people demanding to know why they didn't know what was in the works. On the one hand, we like to think our elected officials are up on every thing going on in their constituencies. But there are some things they're not going to know.

Land deals between private companies are just that ? private. While the mayor and councillors should have their proverbial ears to the ground, some deals don't come to light when some might want them to.

And before any of the homeowners in SouthFields Village get their backs up, we ask them to recall when they bought their properties. The mayor and councillors at the time did not check them out or delve into their transactions, and we doubt the residents would have been very tolerant had there been such an attempt. Like we said, private land deals are private.

What came through very clearly last week is there is information that residents would like and don't as yet have.

But it is also true that an attempt was made in that direction.

Mike Clark, of Leeswood construction, was there, and faced a lot of heat. The point was made a couple of times that he didn't have to be there. It was evident that they were trying to address concerns. He, along with the politicians and Bokor, were frequently shouted at and interrupted at last week's session.

Like anyone else, we can understand passion, especially when one's home and the safety of children are involved. But if they have concerns, they owe it to themselves to ask questions and listen to the answers. Just yelling out they don't want a plant in their community is not going to cut it.