

Editorial ? Vote on the pool could have waited

We have been a little surprised at the amount of reaction to Caledon council's decision late last month, to include an aquatic component in the recreation centre being planned for Mayfield West.

Whether or not a pool is a good idea is something that will be determined in the fullness of time, probably after further discussion and debate, possible appeals and an election.

Swimming facilities are great, and people should have reasonable access to them. It is also true that's not always easy in a rural community like Caledon, where the population is spread out. It requires a certain amount of thought and planning as to where these amenities should be placed.

We do, however, have a couple of problems with the decision taken by councillors at their last meeting of 2016.

They reversed a previous decision reached in committee, and they went against the advice of Town staff.

Both moves are permissible. Decisions are made at the committee level, and they have to be ratified at a formal meeting of council for a reason. There is nothing wrong with a change of position after some second thought.

As for going against the advice of staff, we thought Councillor Nick deBoer put it rather well, when he said it fine for councillors to listen to the advice they receive, but they also have to keep in mind what the community has asked for.

But it is also true that going against the advice of staff carries possible consequences. If there's an appeal of the decision, staff won't be available to back it up. That's something we hope the councillors took into account when voting on the matter.

The other problem deals with the fact that two councillors were absent from the meeting. Doug Beffort was dealing with illness and Annette Groves was addressing a matter in her family.

We grant there is no easy way to deal with situations such as this. Issues like those impacting Groves and Beffort are going to come up on occasion, as well as things like vacations, other municipal business, etc. It's not realistic to expect the business of the Town to stop dead until all councillors are in their seats.

On the other hand, the decision in question passed by a 4-3 vote, meaning the shot was called by 44 per cent of the councillors. And most would agree this was a pretty important issue.

True, there's nothing against the rules about that, but the optics are not good.

The vote should have been delayed, at least long enough to give the missing councillors a chance to offer input.

And if there were time factors at work here, maybe it was those constraints that needed to be addressed.