

Kolb suggests looking to Vaughan for expansion

By Bill Rea

He might be retired, but former Peel Regional Chair Emil Kolb is keeping an eye on things.

He's also come up with a possible vision for dealing with the Bolton residential expansion.

It involves annexing land from the City of Vaughan.

Kolb's proposal was included in Tuesday's agenda for the Planning and Development Committee of Caledon council. It was received with little sign of enthusiasm.

'Unless commanded by council, there's no further action to be taken,' Town CAO Mike Galloway remarked.

The Bolton Residential Expansion Study (BRES) produced six options for where residential growth could go in Bolton, along with three rounding out areas. Town councillors, Regional staff and Regional councillors have been at odds over the most preferred site.

Kolb, thinking 'outside the box' of a way to make Bolton a compete community, is looking beyond the borders of Caledon.

He pointed out the commercial area in Bolton includes a number of large retailers, like Walmart, Canadian Tire, Home Depot, Zehrs, Giant Tiger, etc. There are also various banks and chain restaurants. But he observed the community has not grown in line with the expectations of the people behind these businesses.

The lands Kolb is thinking of lie on the east side of Albion Vaughan Road. It consists of about 153 hectares (378 acres), bordered by Cold Creek Road, Albion Vaughan Road and Kirby Road. It's mainly being put to agricultural or rural uses at this time.

There are a number of benefits that Kolb can think of to using these lands, including the fact a rail line traverses the site, and he thinks an ideal location for a GO train station is nearby.

He also said these lands are close to the Bolton commercial area, as well as to other residential neighbourhoods, meaning there are already existing schools, as well as other community amenities. And there are employment opportunities near the lands.

'To me, all of this makes a little more sense,' he said.

As well, Kolb pointed out the lands are isolated, surrounded by the Greenbelt, open space lands operated by the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) and a hydro corridor.

The lands are outside the GTA West Corridor, and adjacent to the area that's subject to Peel's joint study with GO. It's also bounded by an arterial road system with good access to a major transportation network. As well, there is frontage on Albion Vaughan Road, which is an improved arterial road. He also pointed out there are two existing watermains on Mayfield Road which services Bolton, and a third one is planned. There is also a sanitary sewers on Albion Vaughan Road.

The Town had previously chosen Option 3, also known as the Go Station Focus option, which involves lands on Humber Station Road, between the Canadian Pacific Railway tracks and The Gore Road, north of King Street.

Regional staff in June had recommended a hybrid of Options 4 and 5, an 'L' shaped parcel of land that straddles Humber Station and runs west to The Gore Road, south of King. But Regional councillors overruled their advice and opted for Option 6. Option 6 involves lands that run along the east side of Humber Station between Healey and Mayfield Roads, as well as a small triangular piece of land at the southeast corner of the site. The justification was it was cheaper and made better use of infrastructure already in place. Taking over these lands from Vaughan would require annexation, but Kolb said that's not unprecedented. He pointed to a recent case in which Mississauga took over lands from Halton Region. As well, Dufferin County annexed lands from Peel, that resulted in the building of County Road 109.

'In my life as a politician, I've been through several annexations that have always worked out for the better,' he observed.

Kolb said using these lands for development would allow the Town and Region time to do more and proper planning of their whitebelt lands, and would be a natural extension of the community. And since the lands are isolated, he argued it would not have a detrimental impact on York Region.

Town councillors weren't enthused with the suggestion.

General Manager of Community Services Peggy Tollett told Councillor Barb Shaughnessy these lands were never identified as a BRES option, adding this was the first time Town staff had seen the proposal.

Shaughnessy was concerned that Kolb thought his option was better than the others. 'I'm confused by this,' she said.

Galloway reminder her Kolb is a resident of Caledon and can submit his ideas if he wants to.

Councillor Jennifer Innis said this proposal can't be considered because it was not part of a municipal comprehensive review.

Mayor Allan Thompson was not keen on annexation.

'When you start to annex land from another municipality, you've got to have a really good case,' he commented.