

Peel council votes against Town on BRES

By Bill Rea

The vote was close in the end, but Peel regional councillors last Thursday stuck by their previous position and picked the southern most option from the Bolton Residential Expansion Study (BRES).

Regional councillors voted in July in favour of the option, also known as Option 6, or the Solmar Development lands. These lands run along the east side of Humber Station Road, between Healey and Mayfield Roads. As well, there is a small triangular piece of land at the southeast corner of the site.

This decision went against the advice of Regional staff, who had favoured a hybrid of Options 4 and 5 to the north of Option 6, an L-shaped parcel of land that straddles Humber Station and runs west to The Gore Road.

The Town has been promoting the lands known as Option 3, also known as the Go Station Focus option. It involves lands on Humber Station Road, between the Canadian Pacific Railway tracks and The Gore Road, north of King Street.

In the end, Annette Groves was the only Caledon councillor supporting Option 6.

Mayor Allan Thompson was disappointed, but not surprised with the way things went, but he said the matter is not finished, as the Town can still appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB).

That's where it's going, he said. That's where we're going to have the battle.

Patrick Harrington, a partner with the law firm Aird and Berlis, representing owners of lands in Option 3, told councillors the Town's position was based on advice offered by professional planning consultants retained by the municipality and financed by taxpayers. He also pointed out the Region had retained its own consultant, and they were leaning towards either options 3 or 4 (Option 4 straddles Humber Stations, south of King Street), and Regional staff recommended the 4-5 hybrid.

Harrington pointed out a big argument in favour of Option 3 is a GO Train station coming to the area. There has been reference to the station as being a phantom.

While no such station is expected soon, Harrington said it's in the planning horizon for 2025 to 2030, which he said is also the planning horizon for BRES.

It's a phantom if you make it a phantom, he said, adding if population goes around the train tracks, the province will make investments. It's a self-fulfilling prophecy.

It's in your hands to attract that level of investment, he added.

Harrington pointed out there has never been a report favouring Option 6, and he said concerns have been raised because it's impacted by the GTA West Corridor.

Nothing has changed, he declared. We don't know what's going to happen.

He argued it made sense to wait and see if these lands would be better suited to employment.

Harrington also said his clients are prepared to put up the money for the infrastructure that will be needed for Option 3.

Bolton does need GO Train service, Groves commented, adding she's been advocating that for years. She added GO service will come to Bolton and beyond, no matter where the station goes.

There were also several delegations representing land owners on the north hill, which were known as Options 1 and 2.

Kim Seipt of Your Voice for Bolton spoke in favour of Option 6, praising the decision of council in July.

Regional council listened and made the right decision, she declared.

She also stated south Bolton is becoming a warehouse depot, adding it makes sense to start residential development at the south. She stressed her group does not want to see more warehouses and industry in the south, but want a complete community.

I've been saying that for 10 years or more, Groves told her.

Brampton Councillor Martin Medeiros said it was refreshing to hear, I guess, a residents' perspective.

Lawyer Michael Melling, of Davies Howe Partners, representing Solmar Development Corporation, commented there has been a vast amount of written material prepared on the issue.

It doesn't matter how much you write if you're wrong, he remarked.

He also said there is plenty of material supporting Option 6.

Melling observed Option 3 is expensive. He also said there's information that the majority of landowners in Options 4 and 5 don't want their lands to go first. Mississauga Mayor Bonnie Crombie said she had seen a letter from landowners in Options 4 and 5.

Melling said he had seen the letter and took from that the landowners want to take advantage of the infrastructure they see going into Option 6.

As well, Melling said the GTA West Corridor affects Option 6, as well as Options 4 and 5.

"Nobody knows what's going to happen," he commented, adding it's expected there will be some information very soon.

Melling agreed the GO station is not a "phantom." He said it's going to come and all the options support that.

Thompson said he understood staff's support for the hybrid option, observing they were trying to stay neutral.

"Who can blame them?" he asked. "It's not been easy for any of us."

He said the issue has been through a long process, and Option 3 is the most fiscally responsible in terms of long-term financial health of the area.

"I sort of feel like this is going to be a case of last man standing," Caledon Councillor Barb Shaughnessy remarked, observing the matter will end up at OMB.

"We all know growth is coming," Mississauga Councillor Nando Iannicca remarked, arguing Option 6 is the most cost-effective. He added it's in keeping with the way Mississauga developed.

He also pointed to the position of the landowners in Options 4 and 5.

"You're really backing a horse that isn't in the race," he commented.

Groves spoke about a store owner in Bolton who's some \$130,000 in debt and who recently had a day when the store took in \$16.

Groves stressed the need to concentrate on what's important, pointing out this issue affects the lives of many people who want a solution. She also said they want more people and fewer warehouses.

Mississauga Councillor Carolyn Parrish said Regional council voted in favour of Option 6, a process was gone through with no negative feedback to the plan, and there wasn't much in the way of calls for pick the hybrid.

Thompson said he had not seen the letter attributed to the Option 4 and 5 landowners, adding it was not in the public record. He also said he saw landowners in the public gallery who were shaking their heads when the letter was mentioned.

"I tend not to flip flop," Crombie said, stating she thought staff took a safe position, but she wanted to make the right decision. She said Option 6 allows for logical growth.

"I also believe that it builds a complete community," she added.

Medeiros said Option 6 had the least financial impact on the City, and he couldn't support any other option.

Caledon Councillor Jennifer Innis cited a letter that had been submitted to the Region from area Councillor Rob Mezzapelli, in which he raised health-related concerns.

"The health assessment that was done on the six options found Option 3 (as well as Option 1) achieved the highest ranking, while Option 6 (as well as Option 2) received the lowest health assessment ranking," he wrote. "As it stands today, Caledon is going to be asked to optimize developing a healthy community in an area that ranked the lowest in a health assessment conducted by your own consultant. Basically we will be asked to make the best from the worst option from a health perspective."