

Peel going with facilitation, without Caledon

By Bill Rea

Peel Region is going to participate in facilitation over land-use issues in Bolton, but the Town of Caledon is going to be absent from the table.

Regional councillors Thursday approved part of the motion put forth June 11 by Mississauga Councillor Carolyn Parrish, but sections dealing imposing financial sanctions against the Town were not voted on.

The motion passed by a 14-9 vote, with all five of Caledon's representatives opposing it.

The motion had been introduced at the June 11 Regional council meeting, but the five Caledon representatives walked out before the vote was taken and that broke quorum (each of the three municipalities have to be represented at the Regional council table for there to be quorum).

The motion that passed Thursday called on Regional staff and solicitors to take part in the facilitation regarding Regional Official Plan Amendment (ROPA) 28, dealing with the Bolton Employment Expansion Area. Provisions from the original motion, calling on Caledon to pick up all costs associated with any Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) action dealing with development in town, as well as all the costs related to infrastructure regarding the Bolton Residential Expansion Study (BRES), were dropped at Parrish's request.

Bolton area resident Skid Crease addressed council, representing Our Caledon Our Choice.

"There is more than one voice that speaks for the citizens of Caledon," he remarked.

His was one of several groups that addressed Town council and supported the planning process that Caledon is following. One group spoke in favour of facilitation, he said, adding council unanimously voted against it.

Crease also said it was understood that Caledon would make its decision about taking part. He cited a motion passed at Region in April that stated participation in facilitation would be based on some conditions, including that Caledon agreed to take part.

Crease stated the Town had complied with that motion, and he also pointed out that Parrish's motion had stated that Caledon was "refusing to participate in facilitation."

He called that comment out of order.

Crease stated the Town has been transparent and acted appropriately in its planning, and he asked the Region to acknowledge the excellence of Caledon's planning.

Caledon Councillor Jennifer Innis tried to get Parrish's motion voted on in its entirety, commenting the whole motion was on the council table (and had been since June 11). Parrish argued she had agreed to pull the two provisions before the vote was called, and Regional Chair Frank Dale said that's how he remembered it too.

Brampton Councillor Gael Miles, who wasn't at the June 11 meeting, was not impressed with the motion from Parrish.

"This motion is absolutely contrary to the last motion that was passed by council," she declared. "Absolutely contrary."

"Anybody with half a brain can read it and see it's contrary."

Caledon Mayor Allan Thompson said the Town has an Official Plan that was the result of community consultation and approved by the Province. He added this was a case of one developer trying to do an end-run. Caledon's opposed to it in principle," he added.

Thompson stressed the land-use issues have been dealt with in a long public process, but some representatives from Brampton and Mississauga have decided to go along "with a lone-wolf developer," and set aside the policies in the Regional Official Plan.

Innis commented that contact has been made with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing in an effort to find out what can be discussed with the facilitator. There had been no response yet, and Innis argued that without that information, the motion would be contrary to the Ontario Growth Act and previous statements by Minister Ted McMeekin. Her efforts to get the matter deferred failed.

Caledon Councillor Annette Groves commented the issue started when some residents in Bolton started a petition against the Ministerial Zoning Order (MZO) that was issued by the Province a couple of years ago to advance the development of the massive Canadian Tire facility in Bolton. But she said it's merged into growth issues, and they were not what the community was concerned about. She stated that ROPA 28 does not include the Canadian Tire lands. Groves added OMB was asked in November to combine the MZO with ROPA 28, and the Board refused.

Groves also wondered how the facilitator is going to operate without the affected municipality involved.

"How do you represent Caledon?" she asked, stating it was disrespectful for Brampton and Mississauga to ignore Caledon's position. She added Caledon has always respected the rights of Brampton and Mississauga.

Brampton Councillor John Sprovieri said the whole matter was raised in a motion from the mayors of Brampton and Mississauga, on the basis that this was costing the Region a lot of money. He added that council had received a staff report that stated about \$40,000

had been spent on this before the OMB.

Regional Solicitor Patrick O'Connor said it was more like \$52,000, but it involved ROPA 28, plus other issues.

Sprovieri said that was not a huge amount of money, and he didn't understand why the two mayors would alienate council by doing this.

"Shame on you guys," he declared.

"I don't know what we've come to," Miles commented.

She said less than a year has passed since Caledon councillors were elected to make decisions for their municipality, not Brampton and Mississauga councillors. She charged that planning is among the most important decisions that councillors are called upon to make, and she said Caledon has been consistent in its planning.

Miles added one developer is opposed to the planning that's been done and everyone else is in favour.

She added it's wrong to try and tell Caledon what to do, and she said she would never be involved in bullying a municipality.

"They obviously have the support for their community," she declared.

"I would like to thank the Caledon people for staying of the vote," Parrish said after the vote had been taken. "I have a lot of respect for what you did today."

Thompson couldn't say after the meeting what is likely to develop from the vote.

"It's unfortunate," he said. "We'll see where we go from here."

"Right now, it conflicts with everything," he added. "I don't know what you can do with it."

"More than a dozen landowners and developers and numerous community stakeholders have participated in every aspect of a lengthy public planning process for the lands in question here and with one exception, they are all satisfied it was conducted properly," Thompson added the following day. "We have one developer, a lone wolf, who seems to feel his financial interests should take precedence over the community's interest, input and good planning. The motion before Regional council yesterday was a blatant attempt to set aside the guiding principles of the Peel Official Plan and interfere in the local planning process. This is not in the best interests of the people of Caledon. And it does not serve the interests of the Region of Peel."

"It's hard to understand why a Mississauga Councillor would set aside years of precedent to impose on a local municipality a negotiation process that would benefit one lone wolf developer," Innis added.