

Peel votes for facilitation in Caledon land use issues

By Bill Rea

Peel Region is getting ready to take part in facilitation to deal with some of the land use issues in Caledon, although there are a couple of strings attached.

The motion that was passed last Thursday (after a closed session meeting) stipulated that all parties involved in the appeal of the Bolton Employment Expansion Area and the Mayfield West Phase 2 Employment Expansion Area be invited to participate, and that the Town decides to participate. As well, the motion stated that matters that have not yet been dealt with by Regional council not be dealt with in facilitation.

There was also a provision that the request of Solmar Development Corp. for party status in the appeal of the Bolton Employment Expansion be either adjourned or denied, and that the Region support the Mayfield West Phase 2 Landowners' Group for the dismissal of Solmar's appeal of the Mayfield west expansion.

The move came last Thursday, after Regional councillors heard a deputation from Kim Seipt of Your Voice for Bolton, calling for facilitation.

The matter had come up the previous Thursday at Regional council, during discussion of a progress report on the Bolton Residential Expansion Study (BRES). A motion, calling on Regional council to encourage impacted landowners and elected officials in Caledon to work with the provincial facilitator to discuss long-standing land use issues. The motion was put forth by Brampton Mayor Linda Jeffrey and seconded by Mississauga Mayor Bonnie Crombie, but the matter was deferred until the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing had issued a written request to the region to take part in facilitation.

The motion that was passed last week, also moved by Jeffrey and seconded by Crombie, stated the Minister has issued a letter two days before, encouraging the parties to consider using facilitation.

Seipt stated she and her group are appealing the ammendment of the Regional Official Plan dealing with the Bolton Employment Expansion Area, as well as a Ministerial Zoning Order (MZO) that had been issued two years ago to aid the development of the massive Canadian Tire facility in Bolton.

‘We want to ensure that Bolton and Caledon have the best possible future ahead of it,’ she stated.

She also mention that Mayor Allan Thompson had been quoted as saying that planning in Caledon is different.

‘The only difference is Caledon's planning appears to be based on popularity and special interests, and not based on sound planning policy or fiscal responsibility,’ she commented, adding attitudes like that are why the Town is before the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) so much.

Seipt argued that facilitation is worth a try. She also said mixed use development, such as what has been put forth for Mayfield West is the way to go, not the piecemeal development that's proposed for Bolton.

She also stressed the need for the public to have input.

‘This is not a popularity contest or a political launching pad for re-election,’ she commented. ‘This is a complicated matter which has ended up at the OMB and we have now been given the opportunity to facilitate a possible outcome.’

She also said the public is on their side.

‘The truth is our group and its efforts have been strongly supported by the broader community,’ Seipt said. ‘We are real members of the public.’

Arvin Prasad, director of integrated planning for the Region, told Councillor Jennifer Innis planning is different in Caledon, largely because of the Places to Grow legislation the province came out with in 2006. He said Mississauga is just about built out, and Brampton is close behind, while Caledon has considerable rural lands available for development. He said new numbers have been assigned by the Province which have to be conformed with, and there's not as much local control as there was in the past.

Crombie pointed out both Caledon and Mississauga are subject tot he same Planning Act.

Seipt told Crombie there are about 250 followers of Your Voice for Bolton on social media, and about 30 members who regularly show up at meetings. She added there are various sources of funding, such as holding events to raise money. There are some land owners providing financial support, she said, but ‘no large developers.’

Councillor Annette Groves commented that council is committed to making sure there's public engagement in the process, and she said she will make sure of that.

Brampton Councillor John Sprovieri commented on Seipt's call for mixed use development, stressing the need for a proper mix. He said putting residential development next to industrial is not the way to go.

‘People don't like that,’ he said, adding Your Voice for Bolton complained about the Canadian Tire development because it was too

close to homes.

Seipt said they have always advocated complete community planning, stating they want residential development near employment lands.

The amended motion passed, with just Innis and Councillor Johanna Downey voting against it.

?I felt it was totally premature,? Innis said later, adding the Region will be spending money for lawyers at both the facilitation and OMB.

She also said the lands are in her ward, and she wants a full public process.

Downey said she had problems with having the facilitator on the Mayfield West lands, as well as the lands in Bolton. ?I don't feel the two are connected,? she said.

?Dealing with what we had, I think Caledon came out the best way we could possibly have come,? Thompson commented later. ?I think we let them know that we're not going to be pushed around.?

He added he didn't know if Caledon would vote to take part.

?I have a great deal of respect for everyone's opinion,? he said.