

Peel will hold meeting on BRES by end of February

By Bill Rea

Peel Region is moving ahead with processing the results of the Bolton Residential Expansion Study (BRES).

Regional councillors last Thursday directed staff to schedule the required Public Information Meeting for BRES for before the end of February.

This came after lengthy discussion much of it in camera, involving the use of Provincial facilitation to address Bolton land-use planning matters.

Regional council, in July, voted to take part in facilitation, over the strong objections of Caledon's five representatives. Last Thursday's meeting saw the resolution to take part in facilitation rescinded.

Minutes of settlement have been reached in the facilitation, but Caledon councillors last Tuesday put off accepting them until later this month, wanting more time to study the implications and get more information.

Patrick Harrington of the legal firm of Aird and Berlis, representing land owners involved in BRES, addressed Regional council last Thursday, urging them to proceed with BRES.

Harrington drew an analogy with a beauty contest to describe the Town's process in BRES, in which there were six contestants, and his client won, with other contestants accepting the decision. He argued it's always been the practice at the Region to accept what's been done in the municipality in cases such as this and deal with the necessary Regional Official Plan amendment (ROPA). In this case, however, he said the last-place contestant wasn't happy and proceeded to disrupt other ROPA applications, including ROPA 28, dealing with the Bolton Employment Expansion Area.

Harrington said the Province agreed to set up facilitation, but not involving BRES because that was already before Regional council. There have been calls to redo the BRES process, but Harrington said that would be like redoing the beauty contest from scratch. "Why?" he asked. "This council has never seen the results of what Caledon did. It was a full and complete process, like the Region has come to expect."

"That wasn't a cheap study that Caledon did," he added, pointing out the proposal is to do it again, at the cost to Regional taxpayers. "This is a bottom-up planning process; always has been."

Harrington also observed the Region was looking at restarting a process just because one of the participants didn't like the outcome. He wondered what message that would send to the development community.

Councillor Annette Groves wondered how BRES got into the discussion. She said facilitation was supposed to involve ROPA 28 and the Ministerial Zoning Order (MZO) that was issued last year to allow the Canadian Tire development at Healey Road and Coleraine Drive to proceed. It had been stipulated that BRES was not part of that.

Regional Solicitor Patrick O'Connor said the settlement documents set out a lot of aspects that will have to be dealt with.

Mississauga Mayor Bonnie Crombie didn't like the beauty contest analogy, calling it a "little distasteful."

She added there are questions as to whether there was a fair and open process.

Harrington told Brampton Councillor John Sprovieri that Caledon taxpayers paid for the original BRES study. It was a two-year process, and he said he's heard the figure of \$1 million used to estimate the cost. He added he would expect Peel would pay for a new study.

Caledon Councillor Jennifer Innis was concerned that facilitation was supposed to bring all parties together. "All stakeholders were not part of that process," she remarked, adding the Town spent \$1 million on a process.

Mayor Allan Thompson said the normal process was followed, with studies being done at the local level, then submitted to the Region. He said that was done with the Mayfield West plans, and the same things were asked for involving BRES.

Mississauga Councillor Carolyn Parrish didn't like the beauty contest references either.

"I think you were speaking down to council," she told Harrington. "It's a very bad lobbying tactic."

Parrish also said there are people in Caledon who didn't like the way the process was handled, adding that spending another \$1 million would be a fair price for a proper planning process.

Regarding the beauty-contest analogy, "Maybe that was the problem all along," observed Mississauga Councillor Nando Iannicca observed.

Brampton Councillor Gael Miles asked if there was any indication that the Caledon BRES process was not appropriate.

"We have no indication of any impropriety in preparation of the BRES documentation," O'Connor replied, adding Caledon's application to have it dealt with by the Region is complete.

Director of Integrated Planning Arvin Prasad confirmed that, but added the process takes time and is complex. He said the next step

would be to hold the public information meeting, but that's not been scheduled.

'I'm very confused about what's happening here,' Miles commented. 'The process is not typical.'

She added the Town went through a proper process, and there's no evidence the BRES process was flawed.

'I don't understand why,' she said. 'Why, at the end of the day, one developer, who did not get the results he wanted, has been able to influence the process the way that he has?'

'I understand your frustration,' Miles told Harrington, adding the facts he presented are in line with what she's been told about the process. 'The facts are the facts.'

Caledon Councillor Barb Shaughnessy observed there had been a lot of talk around the table, but no one had yet seen the BRES material on which to base unbiased opinions. She called for a public meeting on the matter.

'To leave the study idle for over a year is losing the Region of Peel money,' she said.

Parris was concerned with the motion to schedule the meeting, commenting it had been made up on the fly, after a lengthy in-camera session. She suggested it be deferred.

'Let's just leave this for two weeks,' she suggested, but that didn't get very far when it came to a vote.

'I'm sure it's a given you'll all be here,' Regional Chair Frank Dale remarked.