

Questions raised on development with individual septic

Bill Rea

The impact of individual septic systems and connections with the Caledon Trailway were on the minds of many at last week's public information meeting regarding a Cheltenham area development.

There are 33 lots proposed in the Upper Credit River Estates (Birmann Subdivision) on the east side of Creditview Road in Cheltenham, and The Correct Group of Companies are seeking a rezoning to facilitate the development. The draft plan was approved by the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) in 2001.

Senior Development Planner Brandon Ward told the meeting the rezoning was one of the requirements of draft plan approval. Some of the lands are to be classed as open space, environmental policy area and rural residential with special restrictions regarding things like pools, decks, etc.

He also said there was a public information meeting on this matter in 2005, and since two years had passed, he said Town policy means another meeting is required.

The development that was draft approved stipulated a communal sewage treatment system to be connected to a proposed Cheltenham Regional Waste Water Treatment Plan (WWTP), but Ward said Peel Region is no longer going ahead with the plant. That means they are now looking at individual systems and the Town is obtaining comments that will be submitted to OMB.

As well, the proposed access to the development is slated to merge with the Trailway.

Consultant Clare Riepma, who was representing the applicants, said there is enough room there, but the details are being worked out. One man at the meeting observed that two lots in the development were supposed to form a park, but Ward said they are not suitable for that. Those lands could be conveyed to the Town or Credit Valley Conservation (CVC), but no decision has been made.

There were several calls to have residents or the Cheltenham Area Residents' Association (CARA) kept informed of what's in the works. Mayor Marolyn Morrison suggested CARA set up a small committee to work on it, adding the local councillors would commit to making sure they get the information they need.

Former councillor Al Frost, a director with CARA, asked for documentation on the minimum area needed for the individual septic, and the size of lot needed to support it. He said there's a lot of concern whether these individual systems will properly support the development.

Morrison said councillors should be able to get that information to CARA.

Frost also said this represents a 'significant' change to what had already been approved, and he wanted CARA to be represented when OMB deals with it.

One woman at the meeting suggested the number of people living in these homes might be more significant than the sizes of the houses, since there will be more of an impact on the loads the systems have to handle. She also pointed out that home buyers coming from urban areas might not be aware of the demands of a septic system. She suggested the developer provide information on how they operate to those buying the homes.

She also said she had heard lots are already for sale.

'They've invented a new river that runs through Cheltenham,' she said. 'They call it the Creditview River.'

As well, she wondered if the lands are able to handle these individual systems.

'That land has not changed,' she said. 'The situation has.'

One man pointed out there were originally 25 lots approved for the development. It was increased to 33 because the increased density was needed to pay for the treatment plant. Since the plant is off the table, he wondered why the development couldn't be cut back to 25. Ward said OMB will have to look into that. Morrison added staff can address that in their report, which will be submitted to OMB. Rob Hughes, manager of development (west) for the Town's planning department, said the plan for 33 lots was based on the servicing situation, adding it will be up to OMB to decide what the appropriate number is. He added the Town can make a recommendation, but pointed out a position has not been taken on this yet.

Alan Furbacher, representing The Correct Group of Companies, assured the meeting they are happy to meet with CARA.

He also said it was the Region that decided the treatment plant would not be feasible, as they had pointed out there were a lot of problems with a similar facility in Inglewood.

'This was strictly driven by the Region,' he declared

The meeting also heard from a woman who said she owns eight acres to the south of the development, and she said 15 of the proposed lots will abut her land. She was concerned for her privacy and wanted fences put up.

There were also some questions about the role of the Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC) in this. Ward had said the lands are

within the Niagara Escarpment Plan, but since they are part of a settlement area, they aren't subject to NEC development control. One man pointed out his property is only 500 feet away and he is subject to development control.

Morrison pointed out that is not unusual, commenting her Inglewood home is subject to NEC control, but the rest of the village is not.

He also wondered what would be done to control light pollution on the site. Riepma said they would have to conform to the Town's standards. "We're in their hands, as far as that goes," he said.

Another woman complained the light pollution and amount of new traffic was not what she bought into when she moved from Brampton. Morrison told her it would be possible for her to appeal her tax assessment.

Another man observed the local water table seems to have been getting higher over the last couple of years, with back yards getting wetter. He was concerned about not seeing any details on how potential flooding would be addressed.

The access through the trail was on the minds of several people at the meeting. One woman pointed out the trail is used a lot more now than it was 12 years ago.

Hughes said they could look into the trail use issues.

One woman raised the issue of the number of people who might be living in individual houses. She said there was nothing to prevent 15 to 20 people moving into a house.

Ward said zoning provisions could be enforced, since multiple families would be seen as a violation.

Morrison added a single-family home would only be allowed to have one kitchen. She added, however, that if a family were to decide to have 10 children, the Town has no control over that.

The number of lots was a concern to some of the councillors, including Gord McClure and Nick deBoer

DeBoer pointed out there have been a number of high-tech septic systems that have been causing problems. "I would hate to think that we're going to encourage more of those systems," he remarked.

Ward told Councillor Doug Beffort OMB has not yet taken a position on the change to individual septic systems, but there was a requirement that the board be kept informed.

Beffort also pointed out there have been more storms and floods, as well as higher water tables, since 2001. He wondered how these matters will be brought to OMB.

Councillor Patti Foley asked if the Town could work with the developer to look for ways to make this a low-impact subdivision, with the use of such features as low-flush toilets and rain barrels. Hughes told her the Town encourages that in every development. Addressing density issues, Councillor Richard Whitehead said he wanted the Town to take a position to OMB, rather than just waiting for a decision to be made.