

Town approves rezoning of large area for industrial

By Bill Rea

Approximately 420 Bolton area acres are now zoned for industrial development.

Caledon council last week passed the necessary bylaw for the rezoning, after councillors had previously approved it in the Planning and Development Committee. Both decisions came after lengthy debates, with Councillors Annette Groves and Barb Shaughnessy voicing their opposition.

Groves made an unsuccessful attempt to have the bylaw deferred, citing the fact that both Mayor Allan Thompson and Councillor Doug Beffort were absent from the council meeting. But Shaughnessy was the only one who backed that.

The lands involved are on the west side of Coleraine Drive, between Mayfield and Healey Roads.

Town staff had recommended the rezoning.

Staff reported it was the Town that initiated the move, adding it was in keeping with the designation on the lands in Caledon's Official Plan. Staff added there are currently no developments planned for this area. Any such development will require site plan approval.

There are allowances for both serviced and prestige industrial uses on the lands.

Staff reported this is part of the boundary expansion exercise for Bolton, and they said the Employment Needs Study of 2007 identified the need for additional employment lands. Council, about seven years ago, selected a preferred land use scenario for lands west of Coleraine, including the area that was subject of this application. The Town sought a Regional Official Plan Amendment (ROPA) 28 in September 2010, and it was approved by the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) earlier this year. The designation of the lands was approved in April with the passage of an amendment to the Town's Official Plan for the Coleraine West Employment Area Secondary Plan.

The staff report stated a wide variety of uses are going to be permitted in the zoning, including business offices, convenience stores, gas stations, trailer storage, etc. There will also be accessory uses permitted, like day care, drive thru, etc. The new zoning also addresses site specific standards for such things as building area, setbacks, restrictions on front-yard parking in prestige industrial areas, as well as on loading and delivery areas.

Planning consultant Glen Broll, of Glen Schnarr and Associates Inc., was pleased that the rezoning was proceeding.

"It's a huge milestone," he told the committee, adding their clients want to get out into the market place to start attracting business to the area. But he said there's always some hesitation because the zoning was not in place.

Groves was concerned that the public had not been aware this was about to happen. General Manager of Community Services Peggy Tollett said there had been a public process as part of the rezoning.

Shaughnessy was also concerned about the number of uses that could be permitted.

"This zoning seems to be a catch-all," she commented.

Groves also referred to the lands to the north. That is where the massive Canadian Tire distribution centre is being constructed, and she pointed out that area is governed by a Ministerial Zoning Order (MZO), which the Province approved to allow the development to go ahead. Groves thought the Canadian Tire lands should be part of this rezoning, since they were also part of ROPA 28.

She also said people in the Bolton area are concerned about having more warehouse development. As well, Groves pointed to the matters involving the GTA West Corridor that passes near the lands, as well as the ongoing issue involving the Bolton Residential Expansion Study (BRES). These matters have not yet been resolved, and she wondered if this was a case of putting the cart before the horse.

"We are predetermining something," she declared.

Tollett countered the lands in question have always been identified for employment, but Groves maintained that deciding what kind of industry goes where should be done concurrent with the determining where residential development goes, meaning this should be done with BRES.

Shaughnessy also expressed concern with the fact it looks like hydrogen production will be permitted in the Canadian Tire facility (it will be used internally to fuel equipment), and she wondered why it's not being listed as a permitted use on the lands in question.

Councillor Nick deBoer, who was chairing the committee meeting, said the hydrogen production is accessory to a warehouse use, and there is no proposal for wholesale production.

Tollett added production could be included as an accessory use of the lands impacted by the bylaw. "It depends on what comes forward," she said.

Shaughnessy maintained if it's desirable, it should be defined in the Official Plan.

She also stressed she's not against hydrogen, but she's against a process that doesn't allow the public to take part. Groves had made an unsuccessful attempt at committee to amend to the staff recommendation, stating that warehousing and wholesale warehousing be prohibited in the bylaw. She maintained most people in the village say they're tired of warehouses coming in.

Shaughnessy agreed.

'I'm not going to force it on a village that doesn't want it,' she said.

'Warehousing is a necessary evil,' Thompson told the committee.

He said people don't like this kind of development because of the truck traffic it generates on Queen Street. But he also pointed out Coleraine is a designated truck route and has the capacity to handle it.

'I think we have a huge opportunity,' he declared.

Groves disagreed, pointing out the planned extension to Highway 427 will send more traffic to Coleraine.

She also said traffic is not the only concern. Warehouses don't create many jobs, she argued. Groves maintained Bolton is still seen as a bedroom community, and should attract companies that will provide jobs locally.

Tollett told Councillor Johanna Downey that Groves' amendment would be in violation of the Town's and Region's Official Plans.

'It is our job to support the Official Plan,' Downey commented.

'It's also our job to support the community,' Groves responded.

Groves kept at it last week before council, when it came time to approve the bylaw, maintaining Bolton residents don't want any more warehouses, and that they have been saying that for years.

'I don't believe we're listening to the community,' she declared.

She also argued there had been no study of the financial impacts on the rezoning, as she called the vote 'premature.'

'I just look at this, and say, 'What's the rush,'' Shaughnessy added. 'We don't have people knocking down our doors for that land right now.'

A main argument in favour of the rezoning remained the financial benefits to the Town, although General Manager of Financial and Infrastructure Services Fuwing Wong said the tax revenue won't be known until the properties are assessed, and it's the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) that will decide that.

'I think I understand a dollar bill,' Councillor Gord McClure remarked as he said he was going along with the staff recommendation. He added companies are not going to locate in Bolton unless there's land available.

'We all understand the dollar bill,' Groves shot back, adding there's a need for jobs and there are different kinds of employers who might provide them. 'I think I know what the residents want and I think I know what the residents don't want.'

'Who says it's going to be warehousing?' Councillor Jennifer Innis countered.

She also pointed out some \$77 million was spent to build a bypass around Bolton to help support the industrial-commercial tax base.

'This is huge for us,' she declared, adding it's time to move forward.