

Town hall meeting deals with traffic and other issues

By Bill Rea

Traffic issues are on the minds of people in Bolton these days, and the roughly 30 of them who were on hand for last Thursday's Town hall meeting told their mayor and councillors just that.

The meeting was hosted by Mayor Allan Thompson and councillors Annette Groves and Rob Mezzapelli. It took place the day after the massive car accident that involved 12 vehicles and closed the intersection of King and Queen Streets in Bolton for some six hours.

Groves said the incident helped point to the need to get the bypass around Bolton functional.

Former councillor Patti Foley was at the meeting, and stressed the previous day's accident was very much on the minds of people in the area. She said it had been the latest in a series of accidents at that intersection, and she pointed to the need to deal with traffic heading north and south, as well as the need to make sure truck traffic uses the Bolton Arterial Road (BAR), or bypass.

Thompson assured her a bylaw is in the works dealing with that.

"We're going to definitely enforce it," he declared.

"This process really needs to speed up," Foley replied, adding once BAR is open, they have to make sure traffic on in doesn't turn into the village core.

There were also calls to restore on-street parking. Foley observed that parking on the street helps slow down traffic.

Jimmy Pountney, a director with the Bolton Business Improvement Area (BIA), said they have started a petition from residents and business owners in the core, calling for all-day parking on Queen Street between King and Mill Streets. It's also calling for an immediate ban on heavy trucks using King between Coleraine Drive and Albion Vaughan Road, as well as on Queen street between Healey Road and Emil Kolb Parkway (trucks making deliveries would be exempt).

Pountney reported Tuesday the petition attracted about 160 signatures from just being circulated in the business community.

He added that last week's accident at King and Queen was one of three major incidents at that intersection in the last year.

"It's really nothing short of a miracle there have been no fatalities at the scene," he remarked.

Groves agreed.

"That's why we spent all that money on the BAR," she said.

One woman commented that trucks are not the only villains. She said there are distracted and speeding drivers, and she wondered if something like speed bumps might help.

"Highway 50 turns into the Autobahn at night," she said.

Thompson said cameras set up to catch people running red lights would help, but he said the province won't allow it. He said they put a moratorium on them. "Don't ask me why," he said.

Groves suggested people write to the Ministry of Transportation about these cameras, in light of last week's accident. She warned nothing is going to happen over night, but it will be a start.

Mezzapelli commented on the need to restrict trucks on King Street, adding that means looking at the situation on Mayfield road to the south. If it can be widened, that will be more of an encouragement for truck traffic to use it.

"If we can make it more efficient, they'll take it," he remarked.

One man was pleased with the idea of getting trucks out of the core and onto BAR, but he was worried about the situation on Coleraine Drive. Students are going to have to cross that road to get to St. Nicholas Elementary School. Students living to the east of the road are slated to lose their school bus service. Groves said she's been hearing from a lot of parents about that.

She added the current traffic counts on that section of road are about 400 vehicles per hour, but it's expected to increase to about 1,500 once BAR opens.

"That road is a major arterial road," Groves declared. "I certainly wouldn't want my child crossing that road."

Several in the room agreed with her, with one person observing that transport trucks can't stop on a dime.

Mezzapelli added Student Transportation of Peel Region (STOPR) has considered things like sidewalks and other infrastructure that's now in the area in deciding who gets to be bused. But he said they also have to look at the traffic numbers once the Emil Kolb Parkway opens.

One man pointed out kids have to be taught about obeying safety rules when walking to school, but Groves said there's more involved than that. She said once BAR is open, some motorists are going to have to get used to driving through roundabouts. She said some are likely to find it a little confusing.

One woman suggested crossing guards for kids crossing Coleraine, but with the anticipated volume of traffic, Groves wasn't sure

that would solve the problem.

Another woman observed the guards would only be there 30 minutes before and after school, so she wondered how much use that would be. She also said the youngsters have been bused for the last 12 years, since St. Nicholas opened. She added she's been unable to get information from STOPR on the criteria for deciding to stop bus service.

Other issues were raised at the meeting.

One woman, representing Caledon Area Families for Inclusion, commented on the housing needs of adults with disabilities and their families. She said there are some 150 families in Caledon with adult members who need some place to live. Groves agreed it's hard on the caregivers too.

Former councillor Christine Cooper brought up what went on recently at Regional council, when the Caledon contingent left the meeting and broke quorum because council was about to pass a resolution that would have forced facilitation in addressing land use planning issues in Bolton.

"You looked like a bunch of rebels without a cause," she remarked.

"We found that we had no other choice at that point," Thompson commented, adding they have been working on possible solutions. Graffiti incidents also came up at the meeting, with Groves commenting that Caledon OPP is interested in talking to the BIA about it.

She added the challenge, when it comes to stopping it, is to get the message to parents that this activity is not acceptable.

"We have a graffiti problem right across the town," she added.

Mezzapelli also asked people not to be too quick to clean up graffiti. He suggested reporting it to police, then giving them at least 24 hours to photograph it, because that might be helpful in finding those responsible.

"It's a signature, a lot of times," he said.