

Town will look at entire Whitebelt for planning

By Bill Rea

The Town will be expanding its GTA West Land Use Study to take in the entire Whitebelt.

The Whitebelt is defined as lands outside the Provincial Greenbelt and existing settlement areas in town which are eligible for development.

Caledon council approved the expansion Tuesday. The Town has already started its land use study as a visioning exercise to identify and protect future strategic employment lands, including those impacted by the proposed highway that will traverse the GTA West Corridor passing through the Whitebelt. But the motion councillors passed Tuesday noted that exercise alone doesn't address all the needs of the community.

"I think this is an extremely important exercise that probably should have been done some time ago," Councillor Rob Mezzapelli commented.

He was a little troubled that the motion didn't specify land uses, and he wanted assurances that all of them would be examined, including agriculture, as part of the broader exercise.

Mayor Allan Thompson assured him the study will look at everything.

Planning staff was also directed to bring a report to council's Oct. 20 meeting with a detailed work plan for the exercise. Director of Development Approval and Planning Policy Mary Hall said agricultural uses would be covered in the report.

She also told Councillor Nick deBoer preparation of the report has already started. It will include terms of reference and costs.

Hall told Mezzapelli a senior staffer is working with a consultant on the terms of reference.

Councillor Jennifer Innis, who moved the motion, commented that the proposed highway will have a significant impact on the community, and local input on the long-range implications is needed.

She added it's an example of responsible planning.

"This should have been done a long time ago," Councillor Annette Groves remarked. "We should be planning 50 years ahead, not doing fractured planning or piecemeal planning."

"I think it's up to us to plan our future," she added.

Councillor Gord McClure lives on the Whitebelt. He said he wasn't sure if he had a pecuniary interest, but declared one to be on the safe side and stood down from the discussion and vote.