

Vote on 12 bylaws that would permit 35,000 new housing units to be held June 25

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A vote on 12 zoning bylaws that would allow 35,000 housing units to be built in Caledon will be held Tuesday.

On June 18, Caledon Mayor Annette Groves said Town staff advised her that reports on the bylaws were ready and would be brought forward at Caledon Council's June 25 meeting for Council to consider and vote on.

The bylaws were first brought forward by Groves using Strong Mayor powers on March 26. Her use of the powers meant the bylaws could pass if just one third of Caledon Councillors supported them.

While she said she stands by bringing the bylaws forward using her Strong Mayor powers, Groves is rescinding the use of them for the June 25 vote ? she said residents made it clear they did not like the use of the powers. A majority of Councillors will now need to support the bylaws for them to pass.

The bylaws in question were drafted by law firm Loopstra Nixon and, if approved, would expedite planning procedures for 12 development applications in the areas of Mayfield West, Tullamore, Alton, Wildfield and Bolton.

Soon after Groves brought the bylaws forward, Caledon residents in opposition to them and the way they were brought forward mobilized. A new citizens' group, Democracy Caledon, was formed and it held a community meeting on April 17 attended by 150 concerned residents.

Concerns shared by Democracy Caledon and residents at the community meeting led to an estimated 350 people attending an April 25 Town of Caledon public meeting on the bylaws.

Over 30 people delegated at the meeting, which lasted seven hours.

As a result of resident concern at the April 25 public meeting, Groves took the bylaws off the agenda of Caledon Council's April 30 meeting where they were originally set to be voted on. She and Town staff then set in motion a series of four public information sessions about the applications.

There was a public information session held on May 15 in Southfields Village, May 23 in Bolton, May 27 in Alton, and June 10 in Caledon East. The sessions were well-attended, with some people attending all four to ask questions.

At the June 10 session, Caledon's Manager of Public Affairs and External Relations Janet Eagleson said, "we don't have a date for when the bylaws will come back; they will be coming back at some point."

Groves said the bylaws coming to the June 25 meeting is a staff-led move.

"I said not during the summer but staff are ready with the reports and they are wanting to (and) prepared to bring it forward, so they are going to bring it forward," said Groves. "And I'm fine with that."

She said staff, through the public information sessions, have heard residents' concerns and have addressed them in their reports.

Debbe Crandall, a volunteer with Democracy Caledon, said some of the largest questions surrounding the 12 zoning bylaws haven't been answered.

?Why do you need to use Strong Mayor powers for this? Why have all 12 been bundled together? Who's benefiting from these 12 zoning bylaws?? she said.

Groves said she recently had a great meeting with the Caledon Chamber of Commerce and that the Chamber members at the meeting were all supportive of the 12 zoning bylaws.

?We need to get ahead of growth and we need to take a proactive approach to development? we need to start working with different levels of government and collaborate to ensure Caledon's future is protected,? said Groves. ?I think it's the right thing to do.?

Crandall said it has yet to be demonstrated that the 12 zoning bylaws would benefit Caledon residents. Caledon has a housing pledge to the Province to build 13,000 housing units by 2031, and Crandall questioned why there's a need to nearly triple that number to 35,000.

Planning professional Victor Doyle, former Manager of Planning for Central Ontario and lead planner of the Greenbelt, said he's never seen anything like the 12 bylaws.

At Democracy Caledon's April 17 meeting he said zoning for tens of thousands of units ahead of detailed planning is premature, and that he's not sure what the urgency is.