

# King won't pass policies to further limit severances

By Bill Rea

Township councillors recently indicated they prefer to judge severance applications in subdivisions on their own merits, as opposed to banning them outright.

Councillor Jane Underhill had wanted her colleagues to direct staff to adjust Official Plan documents to "preclude severances within residential plans of subdivision."

Councillors voted the motion down after a lengthy debate.

Underhill's efforts did have the backing of Concerned Citizens of King Township (CCKT). Schomberg resident Linda Cholmondeley voiced her support, submitting copies presentations on the topic she made to council in 2005 and 2006.

In December '05, she addressed the issue, pointing out planners consistently recommended such applications be denied, citing village community plans. She added many of her neighbours support her position, but were reluctant to speak up because they wanted to avoid conflict in the community.

Underhill expressed her appreciation for Cholmondeley's support.

She stressed that King's villages were developed mainly on septic systems, and that is what has determined a lot of the character in these communities. "I see no need for severances to happen in registered plans of subdivision," she declared.

Underhill added green space appeals to everyone, and it's good for the environment too. She said it allows water to infiltrate and get back into the groundwater system.

Councillor Bill Cober said he agreed with a lot of what Underhill was saying, adding he's an advocate of strong community plans. He said they let council deal with applications on a case-by-case basis.

But Cober argued it would be wrong to just do away with infilling. All municipalities are dealing with issues of intensification, and he said King has to take a lead on that. It would be wrong to call on other municipalities to have intensification within, while expecting King to be left alone.

He added they have to be able to accept some change,

or they'll wind up with results they had not envisioned. "NIMBY-ism is no way to develop sustainable practices," he remarked.

Councillor Jeff Laidlaw commented the problem with deciding issues case-by-case is it sets precedents, with one person being told he can't do what his neighbour was allowed to do.

Laidlaw called for the creation of severance criteria, adding there should be no more infilling allowed in subdivisions until that criteria is in place.

Cober countered that he's suggested such criteria, adding if someone comes up with an application that doesn't fit, then it's up to council to turn it down. "We, as a council, have to say 'no.'" he said, adding the necessary tools and mechanisms are in place now.

Councillor Cleve Mortelliti sided with Underhill, commenting people buy homes in subdivisions on the assumption that not much is going to change within them. He also addressed the intensification pressures, stating he thought they applied to growth centres, and there are none of those in King.

Mortelliti agreed the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) should not get the job of ruling on severance applications in King. If people are going to have the recourse of appealing rulings to OMB, then there needs to be severance policies in place.

Each community plan has a severance policy in place, Planning Director Stephen Kitchen commented, adding council had directed staff to upgrade the policies applying to King City. He also said intensification is expected in all communities, and York Region staff are looking at the situation. He added some is expected in King too.

Councillor Jack Rupke said he couldn't go along with what he called a "Blatant shut-the-door" policy for severances, adding it wouldn't work in today's economy.

"Making money keeps people working today," he remarked.

He added there was an open house to address matters like this and staff was disappointed at the poor turnout. If there's so much

concern over severance policies, he wondered where all the people were.

Underhill agreed change is a fact of life, but she pointed out people are going to react when it occurs on their doorstep. She added changes are likely in King City because of the sewers that are being installed, and she feared that will allow community plans to be challenged and amended easily.

As well, Underhill pointed out infilling severances have been permitted in Schomberg, over the advice of planners, and she argued there's no sure sign that plan policies will prevent them.

But Cober told Underhill there was a lot of agreement at the council table on what was wanted, but he warned the method they were discussing might take the decision-making process out of local hands.

"It's not the end product," he said. "It's the vehicle."

Laidlaw said part of the problem is community character has not been defined. He recalled efforts to address such issues when dealing with the Slokker Canada development in Nobleton, but commented that it didn't work. Some definite definition is needed, or it becomes arbitrary.

"Character is people," Cober told him.

"We're talking about land and not people when we're talking about character,"

Underhill countered, adding people in King appreciate their space.

She added they will never be able to prevent people from going to OMB.

Mayor Margaret Black said this issue has been dealt with in a very public process. She added strong bylaws are in place, from

strong provincial policies and community plans. The number of possible severances available in either the Greenbelt or on the oak Ridges moraine "are so limited that it's extraordinary," she observed.

She also endorsed Cober's comments, pointing

out he lives on one of the severances granted in Schomberg.

Black also commented that King is already green with many natural attributes that can't be touched because of provincial regulations.

"Community is from the heart," she added.



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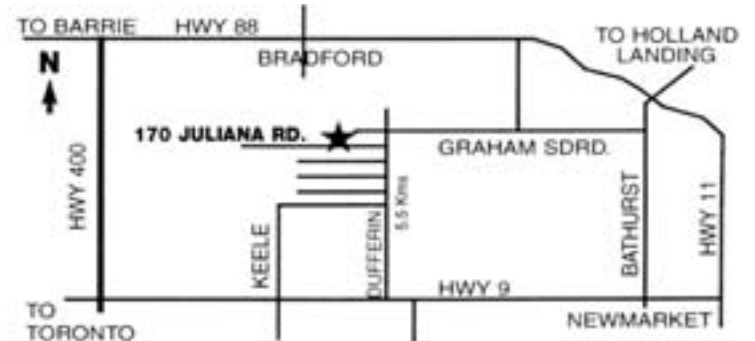
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