

# Resident said he was appalled by what was proposed at council

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Area resident Dennis Mooney said he was appalled at what was proposed, adding concerns that had been raised at the May public information meeting on the application seemed to have been ignored. He said almost nothing had been addressed to justify this, and also pointed to traffic concerns. He said planners acknowledged them, but didn't address them.

"You're being asked to approve a blank ticket," he told councillors.

Mooney added that there is no promise the building won't be converted to another use sometime in the future.

The parking provisions were a big concern for some at the meeting. There are four handicapped spots proposed, but Mooney said he had spoken to medical practitioners, and they told him each doctor would need at least one.

He also had problems with the setbacks and the space left for the sidewalk along King, pointing out that's where the Region leaves the plowed snow in the winter.

"This is a pedestrian-unfriendly proposal," he declared.

There were also concerns over the number and size of the parking spots. Planners had reported the normal size is three by six metres, but the proposal is to shrink them to 2.7 by 5.5 metres. Mooney said that could be a problem for people with mobility issues.

Planners also said 78 spots would be required for a development like this, but added consultant had suggested 74. Reducing the number of spots could contribute to the LEED certification, since fewer spots might encourage more people to walk to the store.

Mooney was also concerned about plans to put up a wooden fence to screen the homes to the rear. Wood won't block noise, he said, adding wood is used to amplify sound in musical instruments.

Another point he made is people living behind the property, on Dew or William Streets, or King Boulevard, would have a hard time making a left turn out of the parking lot to get home. Councillor Cleve Mortelliti observed that issues like the traffic

concerns are really the Region's responsibility, since it's a Regional road.

He agreed the parking spots are smaller than the standard, but they've been reduced to accommodate more. As well, he said the landscaping buffer to neighbouring properties had been reduced to allow for more parking spots.

Mortelliti also acknowledged the proposal isn't perfect, but he saw a lot of good points to it. "I see this as a compromise situation that we're in," he remarked.

In addition, he said cedar fences are commonly used to reduce noise, adding they work better than the criteria from the Ministry of the Environment and are more aesthetically pleasing than some other materials that could be used.

Henry Verbruggen, representing the King Chamber of Commerce, expressed full support for the proposal, adding any outstanding issues can be addressed at the site plan stage.

He addressed a couple of the concerns that have been raised, commenting reducing the front setbacks helps correct mistakes from

years ago by putting parking to the rear.

He also pointed to the need for growth and economic development in the community.

Planning Director Stephen Kitchen said the Region has stated it wants access to the site to be directly across the road from Patton Street to the south. Addressing setbacks, he said the building that used to be the car dealership was closer to the road than the new structure is slated to go.

On the issue of the size of the parking spots, kitchen observed that other municipalities have been opting for smaller ones.

"That's what the industry requires," he said. "That's what the public is used to."

"We're not doing anything we haven't done before," he added.

He also pointed out there's still a lot to do, which explained why the site plan wasn't before council that night.

"As a planner, you probably have a little bit of architect in you," Councillor Jack Rupke told Kitchen, as he asked if there was anything he would like changed in response to the

comments from the public.

Kitchen suggested there should be a different method for calculating the appropriate number of parking spots.

Councillor Bill Cober was enthused with the LEED certification. "The benefits far outweigh the challenges," he remarked.

Councillor Jane Underhill agreed Shoppers Drug had made a number of concessions, but she still couldn't support the proposal. She added she wanted to hear comments from the Township's heritage committee, but Kitchen said this is not a historical property, so he didn't see any reason to hold things up on that score. Underhill maintained she wanted the development to look historical. "King Township should be different," she said.

Kitchen told Councillor Jeff Laidlaw there's a trend now to store snow in the landscaped areas, rather than parking lots. He added the store will need customers who can access it in winter, so Shoppers would have an interest in making sure the parking facilities are adequate.

Laidlaw also wasn't sold

that this building would fit in with the rest of the community. He said it will be a "very boxy, utilitarian building," adding it doesn't mix with such places as Hogan's or Crawford Wells.

But Mortelliti pointed out this is not the site plan stage.

He also thought that calling this a "big box" store was an exaggeration, since the building is slated to have a total floor area of just 14,000 square feet.

"If this is 'big box,' then the concept of 'big box' has been around for a long time," he observed.

Mayor Margaret Black reminded everyone that this site has always had commercial uses, adding the rezoning has been prompted by the planned second storey. She also stressed the property has attracted a high-end, good corporate citizen, adding there are a lot of other uses the property could be put to.

The mayor also responded to concerns about the store being too big, pointing out that at 14,000 square feet, she said there are bigger houses than that in the area.

"You can't call that a big box store," she declared.

# York wins transit safety award from American Public Transportation Association

York Region has won gold from the American Public Transportation

Association (APTA) for its excellent safety program on York Region Transit

(YRT)/Viva buses. APTA presented the Region with the gold safety

award at their annual Bus and Paratransit Conference in Austin, Texas in the category of transit providers who carried more than four million passengers but less than 30 million passengers per year.

"This APTA award is both an honour and a testament to the excellent quality of service that the

Regional Municipality of York provides to YRT and Viva passengers," said Regional Chairman Bill Fisch. "By working closely with our contracted bus operators, we have effectively promoted a culture of safety-first on our transit and rapid transit systems that is the envy of systems across North

America." In these contracts, Region mandates ongoing training for all bus operators and provided financial incentives for its contracted operators if their safety programs improved. Conversely, York instituted financial penalties if operators' safety programs declined.

Following the implementation of performance-based contracts in early 2006, York saw noticeable improvements in transit safety. In 2005, YRT/Viva experienced one preventable accident for every 112,000 kilometres of operation. In 2006, this improved to one preventable accident for every 170,900 kilometres. By 2007, this had improved further to one preventable accident for every 266,500 kilometres - a 138-per cent safety improvement in just two years.

"Our YRT/Viva staff are to be commended on implementing such an innovative program of transit safety," said Vaughan Councillor Joyce Frustaglio, chair of the transit committee of Regional council. "Receiving this gold award affirms York Region's commitment to the protection of our transit passengers and proves our status as a provider of world class transit and rapid transit service."



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