

It's been a long wait for industrial use zoning

By MANDY MARTIN
STAFF WRITER

It's been 13 years in the process, but a 12-acre parcel of land off Honey Road has won an industrial zoning.

When Spiro Ayiomamitis first bought the property in 1985, he had plans to build a detergent mixing plant on the site, located east of Herley Road with its length fronting on Honey Road.

In 1988, a 40,000 square-foot building was proposed to Cramahe Township council for approval. While the council of the day approved the zoning change from rural residential to restrictive industrial for the new plant, area residents concerned with missing details and concerned about any potential chemical threats posed by the plant, protesting the development. They appealed the township zoning bylaw and Official Plan change to the Ontario Municipal Board.

In 1990, an OMB hearing was called, but adjourned after only day's time.

With no OMB final ruling, the property sat in limbo. In the meantime, in 1991, Cramahe Township passed a new comprehensive planning bylaw which repealed all amendments for previous township planning bylaws - including Mr. Ayiomamitis' initial township approving bylaw.

In 1997, the township planner prepared another bylaw to approve a rezoning for the Ayiomamitis property, with a public meeting held August 11, 1997.

In August of 1997, Mr. Ayiomamitis' lawyer wrote to the council requesting a list of township concerns to be addressed in a discussion. That sent by the township, the property owner's response was resubmitted to the then township council.

At an October 20, 1997 meeting of Cramahe Township council, those issues were discussed by the council, property owner and his lawyer. The township council was fundamentally in agreement with Mr. Ayiomamitis'

request for a rezoning change to permit an industrial development. However, with the new Official Plan for the township, his property was excluded from lands designated for industrial use.

A municipal election was held in November of 1997, the new council members to take office in December 1997. Two of the former township council members were not on the 1998, present-day council.

The new township council approved a new Official Plan which received provincial government endorsement March 26, 1998. The one outstanding issue in the whole thing was the outstanding OMB ruling of whether or not the Ayiomamitis property could be rezoned from rural residential land use to restricted industrial land use.

On August 31 and September 1, OMB Chair Marie Hubbard heard the rezoning appeal at Castleton Municipal Building. At the end of the second day, she

found in favour of Mr. Ayiomamitis. He finally has the official go-ahead to plan a detergent factory on his property.

Appearing at the hearing, the owner outlined how his plans have been cut back from 40,000 to 10,000 square feet in size and to only the westernmost part of the property. Plans to also allow a residential dwelling on the site were not approved by the OMB.

The owner's lawyer requested the OMB rule all legal costs be levied against the representative acting for concerned township residents who had continued to oppose the development. OMB Chair Hubbard (a former Mayor of the Regional Municipality of the Town of Newcastle) held back a decision on that matter.

Appearing as a witness on his own behalf, Mr. Ayiomamitis assured the hearing there are no dangerous chemical storage issues, or processes involved in mixing liquid dish detergent (10

per cent of his business) not the dry dishwasher detergent. Further, if there was insufficient water from an on-site

well, the need for water was limited - well within the feasibility of having supplies trucked in.

County talks commercial tax bill relief options

By MANDY MARTIN STAFF WRITER

In an effort to ease commercial tax bills across Northumberland County, a seven-point resolution was going to a vote at Wednesday's county council meeting.

The county, in conjunction with its 13 members municipalities, is proposing:

- the province downwardly revise the education levy portion of the commercial tax bill. The county had understood from previous meetings with the Northumberland MPP Doug Galt and ministry officials, that the education levy would be 50 per cent or less of the commercial and industrial tax levy for 1998. Instead, residential taxpayers got the education break. In many municipalities, the 1998 education rose for commercial and industrial taxpayers in 1998.

- local municipalities will work on tax installment and penalty forgiveness programs for 1998. With four months left in the year and two "official" installments coming up September 30 and November 30, that leaves four months in 1998 on which to calculate installment plans for this year.

- county council will consider options for a tax credit program, at the same time pushing the province for 50 per cent rebate funding (i.e. applicable to tax increases of more than \$750.).

- county council will ask for provincial Association of the Municipalities of Ontario to push the province to share any tax relief program funding.

- province must consent to permitting local municipalities to look at all the options for 1999 taxes.

- provincial Ministry of Finance staff to continue to work with the Rural Ontario Municipalities Association regarding the Farm Tax rebate program.

- provincial finance ministry staff to meet with the developers to work out an assessment solution from vacant land designated as residential class.

At Tuesday night's council meeting, Cramahe Township indicated it would support a four-month 1998 tax installment plan with no interest charges until December 31, 1998. The offer is to be capped for those experiencing a set percentage increase, e.g. 50 per cent or more, plus a dollar increase amount, e.g. \$1,000.

The township deferred final decision until the county council vote on yesterday, Wednesday, in Cobourg.

Rent decrease due to tax decrease?

Up to village to tell tenants

Local municipalities now have the responsibility to notify landlords - and tenants - if rents charged are reduced because of a drop in 1998 municipal taxes.

It's part and parcel of the downloaded responsibilities and new services from the provincial government to local municipalities in 1998.

Under the Tenant Protection Act, the regulations dealing with automatic rent reductions were expected to become law at the end of August - the same time the municipalities were hammering out their final 1998 tax bills.

The new provincial regulations state municipalities must send notices of rent reductions to landlords and tenants between October 1 and December 15 for the 1998 tax year.

That poses a logistical problem for even the small village of Colborne.

"Landlords are no longer obligated to provide us with

tenant lists," Clerk Treasurer Beth Vosburgh told Colborne council. "I don't know how we're supposed to notify the tenants."

The number of multi-unit rental properties is minimal for the village, estimated at one or two - plus social housing units - but the responsibility by law is still there.

The new regulation states the provincial financial formula is "based on the assumption that, on average, taxes make up about 20 per cent of the rent.

The threshold of automatic rent reductions is a 2.5 per cent tax decrease and municipalities will be required to send notices to landlords and tenants of buildings containing seven or more units where the tax decrease is 2.5 per cent or greater."

- Mandy Martin