

Community

Region appears more willing to re-think Silver Creek issue

It appears as if the Region is now more willing to side with more than 600 Georgetown residents and take a more cautious approach to the development of the Silver Creek Valley.

Halton Hills Regional councillor Marilyn Serjeanston said Wednesday at Regional council she has requested staff attempt to find a way of measuring the effect the cumulative impact of several projects proposed for the valley would have on the environmentally sensitive class two wetlands.

The councillor made her comments after two Georgetown residents, Marilyn King and Ashley Ransom, appeared before Regional council and argued the cumulative impact of the proposed projects must be measured before any are approved or there is a good chance the wetlands could be irreparably damaged.

The two, during each of their presentations, pointed out to council members that on Monday

they presented Regional Chairman Peter Pomeroy with a petition signed by approximately 600 people urging the Region "to use every possible action to preserve, protect and restore the Silver Creek Valley."

Ms. King and Mr. Ransom made a similar presentation to Halton Hills Council Monday. Following the Regional council meeting Mr. Ransom said public input on how projects for the valley should be investigated definitely contribute to council's thinking. "Without it I don't think the cumulative impact would have been considered. It's a new approach for the Region," he said.

Indeed, the projects slated for the valley are only subject to class environmental assessment and not a full environmental assessment. That means the Region is only obligated under provincial legislation to consider each project on its own.

Mr. Ransom qualified his reac-

tion by saying the public won't be entirely satisfied until it sees how the Region will measure the cumulative impact of the projects.

Regional projects proposed for the valley include the possible twinning of the Silver Creek trunk sewer, Test Well 15 - a possible source of water for Georgetown residents, the Mountainview Road Landfill Bridge and the proposed Black Creek Valley Trunk Sewer project.

Coun. Serjeanston said she hopes the cumulative impact can be determined without carrying out a full environmental assessment. That would mean restarting the studies that have already been done on the proposal. If this happened, "it wouldn't be good value for the tax dollar," she said. The councillor is hopeful that an informal approach can be taken in which the existing studies on each of the projects are considered together.

Burlington Regional Councillor Ralph Scholtens described the separate studies for each project as a situation where "the left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing." To this he added, "surely we can have some sort of (combined study)."

Justifying the need for a comprehensive report, Coun. Scholtens said "I don't have to tell anyone here the importance of the wetlands to the province."

Two meetings scheduled to eye housing needs

Halton Region has scheduled two public meetings on the types of future housing Halton needs, but at least one Regional councillor thinks the number of meetings is too few.

"If we, (the Region), are serious about the public process we'd hold several meetings at an appropriate time and place but this report is saying we are not serious (about the process)," said Burlington Regional councillor Walter Mulkewich, Wednesday.

Coun. Mulkewich was referring to a Regional staff report recommending two public meetings on the issue of housing be held Dec. 5 at General Wolfe High School in Oakville and Dec. 6 at Milton District High School in Milton. Both meetings are scheduled for 7 p.m.

"We are disenfranchising a large portion of the population by holding only two meetings," the councillor unsuccessfully argued. Excepting Coun. Mulkewich and Burlington Coun. Ralph Scholtens, all councillors voted in favor of only two meetings.

Halton Hills Regional Councillor Marilyn Serjeanston seemed to represent the opinion of many of the councillors when she

argued that the Region's municipalities are all holding similar public meetings on the housing issue. The town's planning staff will be hosting such a meeting Nov. 29 at the Civic Centre. Instead of holding more Regional public meetings, it should request that individual municipalities submit to the Region comments coming out of their public meetings, contended Coun. Serjeanston.

The councillor suggested the lack of numbers of those who have attended previous planning-related Regional public meetings shows Regional staff has no reason to hold more at this time.

Those who attend the Regional public meeting will have an opportunity to discuss with the planning department Halton's future housing needs in the context of expected population growth, age distribution, economic, employment trends and types of housing - low density vs. high density housing.

Regional staff wrote in its report that a meeting has been scheduled in the north and south part of Halton to make it easier for residents throughout the Region to attend one of the public meetings.



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