

Wednesday, October 16, 1991

Notification policy needed for Site Plan committee

One of the biggest issues for neophyte political candidates during the local municipal election campaign, is public access to Town councillors and staff.

Most of these candidates are saying current councillors and staff haven't properly consulted the public before making decisions.

Comparatively, current council members counter by saying they go beyond the legal requirements to ensure the public has an opportunity to comment on proposals before councillors make a decision.

Who's right? I'm sure people could point to examples supporting the positions of both sides.

Assuming, for a second, the initial charge is correct, it therefore follows that Council and its staff have failed to either establish or adequately com-

municate Town policies defining how and when the public can participate in the decision making process.

For example, I recently learned the Town Council sub committee, Site Plan Committee, doesn't have a formal public notification policy.

Site Plan Committee deals with development applications once they have been initially approved by Town Council. Site Plan Committee members consider issues such as the appropriate height of a building and what type of landscaping is necessary for a particular development.

The committee's purpose is to ensure a development project complements the surrounding area as much as possible.

During a recent interview, Town Planner Andrew Colley said, under the provincial Planning Act, Town



Ben's
Banter

by
Ben Dummett

staff is in no way obligated to notify any members of the public when a development application is scheduled to go before a Site Plan Committee meeting.

However, in the name of public involvement, staff sometimes notifies members of the public

about an upcoming Site Plan Committee meeting.

In one instance, members of the public will be notified about an application going before a Site Plan Committee meeting, if committee members decide to defer the item to another date. It's generally acknowledged, however, a development application is only deferred if residents attend the initial meeting to express concern over the application.

Understandably this sequence of events rarely happens because it's only by chance rather than by Town notification that people find out about the original meeting.

In another instance, residents neighboring a proposed development will be notified when the item is scheduled to go before a Site Plan

Committee meeting if the Town planner determines the project is controversial.

It's not too difficult to realize this process leaves staff members open to the possible criticism that they favor developers if the planner chooses not to notify the public about an application going before Site Plan.

Staff was expected to go before Site Plan Committee yesterday (Tuesday) to get clarification on the committee's notification policy. Results of the meeting were unavailable at press time.

It would be a step in the right direction if Site Plan Committee members established a formal notification policy.

However, to only take action now shows Town council and its Site Plan Committee are weak in the leadership department.

Lack of direction is Canada's main problem

Not so many years ago there was afloat in Canada a general consensus about what we were and a general idea of where we intended to go.

Some of those ideas might well have been wrong but they did provide us with a general framework within which to operate. I am not in any way or form implying that things were perfect, just making the point that while once we had a sense of direction we are now like a boat without a compass, or if we want to be modern without a Loran.

The result is that in large and small issues we feel a rather justified sense of vertigo, of lack of balance.

We have been used for over 40 years to seeing the world as a stage for the conflict between Communism and, what we liked to call, the Free World.

There is hardly any communism left, the little still around has become rather meaningless

and certainly not too dangerous. But the old manichean view of the world had the beauty of positioning us.

We knew there was something called class warfare, whatever that meant. Now we have what?

Nationalism was another powerful prop. It was "our Country right or wrong," now we see the resurgence of tribal warfare in Europe and something very similar to it in Canada.

Racial consciousness was another useful bit of information. The WASPs were the best, the rest was going in descending order. Now even to claim some racial sense of superiority is unacceptable. We could go on pointing to the many, even if silly, certainties replaced by a world of fluidity. But just look at the last two examples.

On one hand we see the resurgence of a sense of tribalism which can hardly be without a racist content. On the other hand



Another
View

by
Carlo Testa

we see the desire, the need to join forces in some kind of upernational structure, eg.: the Common Market, the North American Free Trade zone, the new Japanese area of co-prosperity. Can we be good members of the tribe and good members of the supra-national entity. Can we be Quebecers, Canadians and North American?

Potentially we can, practically we bump into difficulties of split loyalties and massive intellectual confusion.

On the small scale we are plagued by the same sense of lack of direction. Children can nowadays leave their home at 14-16 and receive welfare from the state. But the state does nothing to instill discipline and a code of values in their wards. Peer pressure, peers law becomes the only prop for the young.

Workers expect to be paid, and so do their employers, for poorly performed work. The "wage" has become a due, not a reward.

Local governments are completely lost in the rough currents of new development and conservation. And even within the conservation tribe there is great confusion about what is good and what is bad. A simple test: does anybody know if more pollution is created by herbicides and pesticides or by cultivating six times per season the same field?

When the battle for the economic independence of

Canada or for a "made in Canada" constitution was joined we had some guidelines. The new made in Canada constitutional proposal does not offer any clear image of the end result. We are just told: it is good for us.

As you can see, uncertainty, contradictions are with us from the macro to the micro, all of this compounded by a terrific rate of technological change.

It is hardly surprising that we feel lost: we are lost.

For years, there have been attempts to find new parameters, new guidelines, new values. We have so far failed. Desperate people have resorted to the sense of belonging offered by sects, cults, or looked for solace in drugs, physical and intellectual ones.

It is not surprising many of the proposals presented to us by our political masters leave us rather sceptical. As the saying goes: it is difficult to go there if we do not know where "there" is.

People's Forum

Highrise threat continues according to R.A.I.D.D. spokesman

Dear Editor:

Re: Maple Avenue Highrise Threat Continues.

The efforts of speculator Frank Zupet to build condominium apartments on Maple Avenue resumed October 7. The consulting firms he has hired to smooth the way for the scheme held an open house at Park School to meet the public and present their findings to date.

The evening was a study in the techniques of "divide and conquer". The findings of the companies were presented on a number of display boards, each showing a small portion of the picture. It is much easier to candy coat the plans if the sugar is applied to small pieces, particularly when the pieces do not accurately represent the available information. The board titled Generalized Zoning Map, for example, showed only two types of residential zoning, low density and medium/high density. It completely ignored the ac-

tual zoning of the area which includes four separate residential designations, R1, R2, R3 and R4. Nor did the map mention that the scheme will require a zoning change from R1 to R4.

The rather innocent little traffic study map showed the peak hour flows along Maple Avenue and came with the verbal conclusion from the presenter, that these flows appeared to be "C" levels and that "D" levels were considered acceptable. There was no mention of who found these levels acceptable nor of the fact that the study was completed in the last week of August. When this information came out, it was admitted that this might not have been the most representative week and "correction factors" would have to be applied to the data.

The information on the visual impact map indicated that the visibility would be minimal from most directions. It was only

under close questioning that the consultant admitted that the data on the map applied to lines of sight to the property in general and not to any specific size or location of a building on the three lots in question.

When asked the number of announcements which were mailed out inviting the public to the evening, the consultants admitted that just over 300 were sent. Informing 300 of the 7,100 or so households in Halton Hills does not represent a fair sampling of the community. The consultants are wrong if they plan to use the turnout as an argument that this scheme is only a local issue and that only local people need be concerned. If this spot rezoning is allowed to occur, a precedent will be set and any speculator who can assemble a parcel of land anywhere in Halton Hills will find it much easier to have the land rezoned to suit his purposes, regardless of the interests of the neighborhood and community.

The callous disregard of Mr. Zupet and his consultants for the nature of Georgetown and the surrounding neighborhood came to the fore when Mr. Don May, of the consulting firm May, Pirie and Associates, stood before a large gathering of those in attendance and announced to one and all that the reason why Parkview Blvd. dead-ends the way it does is to allow access for future development of the Fair Grounds.

Sincerely yours,
Ken Thorn
Chair
Maple Avenue Group
R.A.I.D.D.

and sponsorship of the Herald is very much appreciated. As you know, the proceeds exceeded our most imaginative expectations.

It is events such as this, the recognition and interest of the community, and the continuing assistance we receive from you that encourages us in our objective of Seniors Centres in Halton Hills.

Sincerely,
Ross Bethel
Vice-President,
Georgetown and District
Seniors Association.

Thanks from seniors

To the Editor,

I have been asked, much to my pleasure, to express to you and to the staff at the Herald, the appreciation of the Georgetown and District Seniors Association for your interest and generous time and space to our association.

Most recently, I would like to single out the very significant event of the Blue Springs Halton Region Golf Tournament. We feel that both you and your publications played a significant role preceding and on the day of the tournament. The direct interest

Region needs new committee

Dear Sir:

Our Regional Government has three standing committees which operate largely in isolation of one another. Only one person, the non-elected Chairman, serves on all three committees and has full information regarding issues before the Regional Council. This is a heavy responsibility. There is no political body to monitor the health of the Corporation, to direct, advise, and assist the Chairman, to provide a stronger voice in the "management" of the Corporation, to be involved in priority setting, direction and control (as opposed to administration of the Region).

A body of this kind to focus on policy development and management was recommended by consultants Hickling and Johnson for Halton about 10 years ago. No action has been taken by succeeding Councils.

The Region's very capable C.A.O., on the other hand, heads a very able team of administrators. They meet on a regular basis on administrative and management issues.

Questions need hardly be asked regarding the relative impacts of the Councillors and of the bureaucrats. More pointedly, are the elected representatives of the Halton taxpayers really in charge?

A Board of Control or Executive Committee has not been favored by Halton Regional Councillors. Reactions to the proposal reflect a fear that a group of Councillors might gain undue influence and do not reflect on the job to be done. Recently an independent study of administrative practices in Essex County has resulted in the formation of a central committee, something quite lacking here.

A recommendation has been advanced in Halton to form a committee of the Regional Chairman together with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the three standing committees, seven members. If any one of our four municipalities is not represented, then Councillors from that municipality might name one of their members to serve as an additional member. The duties of the committee would be carefully defined and agreed upon by the Council as a whole. The membership would change from year to year.

Only a few Councillors have grasped the importance of this proposal. Ratepayers may now be heard from in the weeks ahead at All Candidates' Meetings.

For your consideration,
Respectfully submitted,
John K. Graham,
Regional Councillor - Ward 4,
Town of Oakville.

Write us a letter!

The Herald wants to hear from you. If you have an opinion you want to express or a comment to make, send us a letter or drop by the office. Our address is 45 Guelph St., Georgetown, Ont. L7G 3Z6.

All letters must be signed. Please indicate your address and telephone number for verification.

The Herald reserves the right to edit letters due to space limitations.