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## Water program comes under fire

By Dianne Cornish

Two Georgetown South subdivision developers seeking water allocation approvals from Halton Hills Town Council last Monday left empty-handed. Instead, council decided to adopt a cautious approach and deferred a decision on revising water capacity allocation reserves until a general com-

mittee meeting of council, Jan. 4.

As a result, requests by Ernie Bodnar for approval of 154-lot water capacity for the second phase of Maple Creek subdivision and Haydn Matthews for 139-unit water capacity for the first phase of Paramount Homes were put on the back burner pending council's future decision on water availability

to serve future development.

During debate on the town's water allocation program, several councillors took part in a prolonged, often convoluted, discussion on groundwater capacity and whether the town might approve more water for development than actually exists in the Halton Hills aquifer. Despite assurances from the town's deputy planning director that the town's water allocation program is set up in such a way that it protects the town from over draft approval on developments, Councillors Gail Rutherford and Al Cook remained unconvinced.

Rutherford and Cook both expressed concern about the town's obligation to provide water if the town should give draft approval to developments and later learn that the water capacity isn't available.

"What happens if all (applications) are draft approved and we don't have the water; what do we do?" Rutherford asked. "If we over draft approve, are we legally bound?" Cook asked before persuading council to defer a decision until a legal opinion could be obtained.

Town administrator Dan Costea insisted that the town draft plan approvals "can stand up in court." MacLean also contended, "The town is fully protected."

When Rutherford pushed for definite assurances about the availability of groundwater in the Halton Hills' aquifer, neither Wes Lammers, a Ministry of Environment (MOE) official from Toronto, nor Ric Robertshaw, Halton Region's engineering services director, could provide a full assurance. When she asked Lammers if water allocations connected with the yet-to-be-developed Lindsay Court well could be cut back if the MOE finds that the water is coming from the same well field as the Princess Anne well in Georgetown, Lammers replied, "I do not believe so, although the proof is in the pudding."

Later during discussion, Councillor Marilyn Serjeantson asked Robertshaw if the town would be putting its water allocation system in jeopardy by approving revisions to water capacity allocation reserves contained in a report presented by MacLean. Robertshaw replied, "We feel we have a reasonable number here (water allocation projections). To say, we've confirmed that amount and it cannot be taken away; we cannot say that."

Robertshaw added that although regional officials feel that the water allocation numbers are reasonable, "there's no guarantee on a groundwater system." There's always the potential that the MOE will revoke a water-taking permit if the aquifer is at risk, he noted.

"Are we putting our town at risk or not?" Serjeantson asked. Lammers replied, "We're trying to be as conservative (on water allocation numbers) as we can; we cannot tell you."

Rutherford suggested that if the town over draft approves on development, it'll be obligated to approve a water pipeline connection with neighboring Peel Region before the town can grow to its projected 40,000 population within the next couple of decades. "What we're deciding tonight is whether we go to lake-based water," she contended. "We need a referendum if we're going to lake-based water," she said.

At the conclusion of the debate, Cook persuaded councillors that the matter merited "more intensive discussion" at the committee level.

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