

Loblaws wants council to decide on planned store before Nov. election

While Loblaws wants council approval on its proposed supermarket for the Dominion Gardens property before the municipal elections, other commercial property owners are asking for an indefinite delay.

A second public meeting was held Monday night on Loblaws' proposal to build a 125,000 sq. ft. building (smaller than the 138,000 sq. ft. originally proposed) on the commercial area designated at Dominion Gardens in the centre of Georgetown. The one mega building would replace the plaza envisioned for the area.

Loblaws planner Richard Zelinka outlined the latest proposal by the company, explaining it would include a 74,000 sq. ft. grocery store, with the remaining space being used for other retail ventures such as a Good Life Fitness Centre in the mezzanine, medical offices on the ground floor, a bank, home décor area, floral shop, dry cleaning, pharmacy, photo lab and baby and toy needs. In the latest proposal, Loblaws is not asking for an accessory garden centre, but is requesting permission for a gas bar.

Town planner Joanne Magee said there would be four exits, two onto Guelph St. and two onto Mountainview (one for delivery trucks only). There will be close to 700 parking spots.

Zelinka asked that council make a decision on the project before the municipal elections.

But consultants for several commercial property owners speaking, at the public meeting, opposed that suggestion. Consultants for Georgetown Market Place, Sobeys and Queensgate Properties said a decision is premature until council viewed all commercial applications.

Ron Webb, a lawyer representing the Georgetown Market Place (GMP) said this project would be a very significant departure from current planning and would have profound effects on the commercial structure of Georgetown, especially since applications for other grocery stores are now pending.

"Therefore we submit it is premature that a decision be made on any application outside of a comprehensive review of commercial policies for Georgetown," he said.

GMP is concerned about the loss of an anchor at the mall, and even more so, if that loss is not replaced by a similar draw.

Zelinka said Loblaws was in talks with Winners to sub-lease the current Loblaws space, but until the Dominion Gardens project is approved, it's not possible to firm up tenants for the GMP.

Gordon Driedger, representing Sobeys, which is planning a 48,500 sq. ft. grocery store on Guelph St. between Canadian Tire and Home Hardware, said the Loblaws project is not what was intended for the Dominion Gardens land and a decision to go ahead would "call into question the integrity the commercial policies of the town's Official Plan." He suggested the Sobeys' and Loblaws' projects be dealt with simultaneously.

W. Scott Morgan, a town consultant who has been studying the commercial situation in Halton Hills since the early 1990s, suggested there is enough population to support both the Loblaws' project and an additional discount grocery store, should one go into the GMP. However, Morgan did not assess the impact of a Sobeys' store. He said it was unlikely that

the GMP space would remain vacant—it's an "easy lease out."

This term of council has only three council meetings remaining before the municipal election: Oct. 6, Oct. 20, Nov. 3 and one after, Nov. 24.

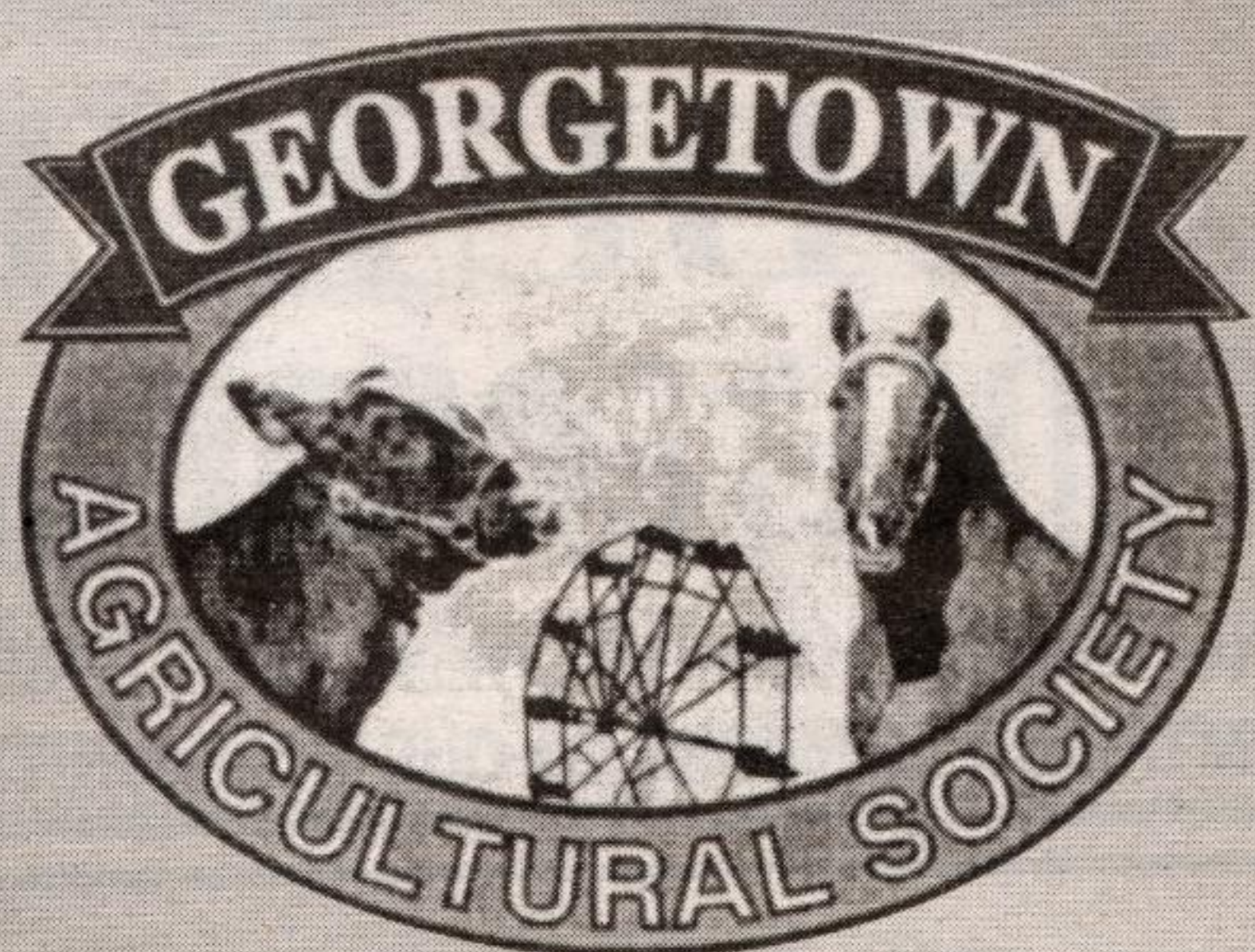
Planning director Bruce MacLean said town staff was working towards presenting a report on that timeline but could not commit to a specific date.

Ward 4 Councillor Ron Chatten wanted a special council meeting on the project, attended by the consultants, so that councillors could ask questions (they are not allowed to during public meetings) before the staff report is completed. MacLean said he would try to arrange something after consulting with Acting CAO Bob Austin.

However, Ward 1 Councillor Clark Somerville disagreed with that extra step, saying it would "open up a can of worms" and "it's going against the process."

Last chance for public comment on the project is Sept. 30. Letters should be sent to the town's planning department.

—By Cynthia Gamble, staff writer



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