

Councillors oppose plan for church

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Staff Writer

Rural councillors Bryan Lewis and Joan Robson were two of the four councillors who recently opposed changing the Official Plan and zoning to allow a church on Regional Rd. 25 in southwest Halton Hills.

St. Mathew's Mar Thoma Church has applied for Official Plan and zoning amendments to build a 13,300 sq. ft. church on a 49-acre property on Hwy. 25, about half a kilometre north of Five Sideroad (Campbellville Rd).

According to Glenn Wellings, planning consultant for the church organization, the church will only be a small portion of the property with 44 acres to be left in agricultural production. It's currently used for horses and hay. The lands are not part of the Greenbelt, he said.

The one-storey building, similar in size to Hillcrest Church, will serve 140 families of Indian descent with an Anglican Christian-based faith. The congregation is hoping to re-locate

from Markham.

While zoning and current Official Plan allows for the construction of churches for local needs, amendments are needed in this case because the congregation will serve families from the Guelph, London, Kitchener-Waterloo, Hamilton and the Greater Toronto Area. The site was chosen because it would provide a central location for the congregation.

The church is not proposing any outdoor functions, Wellings said, and there will be parking for 165 cars. The existing house on the property will remain.

Lewis argued the Official Plan states rural churches should serve the rural community, and "this clearly is not the case." He asked what is the guarantee the church congregation would stay small.

Planning director Bruce MacLean noted a condition would be included in the amendment that the church or accessory uses could not expand beyond the five acres. As well, the maximum size of the accessory build-

ings would be limited to 1 per cent of the five acres, rather than the church's requested 2 per cent. The height is limited to 40 feet.

"In staff's opinion, ... a church is a low intensity use that should not have significant negative effects on the surrounding properties," stated the planning report.

But Robson worried that approval would set a precedent for the rural area under the new Official Plan (which does not allow churches in the rural area).

A left-hand turn lane would be added to alleviate traffic concerns on Regional Rd. 25. A left-hand turn lane at Chudleigh's Apple Farm on Regional Rd. 25 is also being included in the proposed 2007 regional budget.

Also opposing changing the current and new Official Plan to allow the church were ex-councillor Mike Davis and Ward 3 Councillor Moya Johnson, based on the precedent reasoning.

Approval of the church is still conditional upon Halton Region approval of changes to its Official Plan.

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From grandparents the late Dennis R. Carr and Merle Carr. Much love to each.



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