

# Council ignores Town staff recommendation

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residents to the Milton Leisure Centre gymnasium to air their beefs with the proposal. It has ignited a torrent of opposition from those who use the land as a park despite its official designation as an institutional zone.

Members of the deaf community were passionate about preserving the land surrounding the Ernest C. Drury School for the Deaf, saying the issue for them is safety and heritage.

But after drawing up a technical report, Town staff recommended approving the development subject to a string of conditions, which the developers promised to adhere to.

"We feel it now balances the amount of land being developed with the amount of open space," said the Town's planning director Mel Iovio.

But not in the minds of the assembled residents, many of whom made it clear they would be satisfied with nothing other than keeping the land as it is.

Currently the land is owned by the Province through the Ontario Realty Corporation. It went up for sale after the government decided to unload about \$200 million in surplus land and buildings.

The Milton site went on the market after the Provincial school, along with the Ministry of Education, judged the lands as extra. And though they were offered to the Town, council decided in an in-camera session that the price was too steep to swallow.

That left the door open for H.D. Investments to move in. They purchased the land, conditional on getting the rezoning needed for the proposed bungalow condos.

But Mr. Penman wondered why the institutional zoning in Milton's Official Plan should alter just because the developer asked for it.

But Milton seniors need a place to live, said Richard Gantor, the evening's only vocal defender of the proposal.

"Is it too big of a sacrifice to give up some of our greenspace to give seniors a convenient place to live?" he asked.

With most of the woodlot preserved, almost everyone wins in the latest deal, said Mr. Gantor.

But the deaf wouldn't win, said former York MPP Gary Malkowski through one of two interpreters on hand for the evening. The former student at the Provincial school began his presentation by attacking Cogeco 14 for not providing closed captioning. He then charged everyone in attendance — the public and councillors alike — with the responsibility of stopping the application.

"This planned proposal is stealing the souls out of deaf children," said Mr. Malkowski. "I refuse to let this happen. Let's find a better deal."

But the biggest applause of the evening was reserved for Richard Murzin, representing the Friends of E.C. Drury group.

"The proposal, there's no two ways about it, is a forced fit," he told council. "If the Province feels that money is more important than Milton, it's up to you to tell them different."

He accused the developer of saying anything in order to get the deal done.

But changes to the plan have been made to better reflect the desire of the community, said H. D. Investments solicitor Allan Liebel.

"We've saved more trees, we've solved access problems," he said. "That's the reason for all the changes."

And if residents are holding out for the status quo, it isn't going to happen, said Mr. Malboeuf. Fighting the proposal at the

OMB would be akin to spitting in the wind.

"If we allow this to go to the OMB, we could be the big losers. We could lose much of what our staff has been able to negotiate with the developer, such as the tennis court and the five hectares of green-space," said Mr. Malboeuf. "To spend hundreds of thousands of those taxpayers' dollars fighting an OMB case we can't win

would be irresponsible."

He was backed by Mr. Day.

"If I could stand here and find a way for us to own those 33 acres, I would support that," he said. "But I think the writing is on the wall. The Province is not going to keep it as a park."

And maintaining the institutional zoning could lead to a far bigger headache for residents," Mr. Day said.

"I think we should take this deal while we can get it because there wouldn't be any guarantee we'd get any of the park at all."

But the density of the small bungalows crammed onto the remaining 18 acres of land is enough to kill the proposal, said Mr. Hunter. "This one fails on density alone. This is an inappropriate level of intensification on this property."

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