

Councillors' backs up over agenda item regarding composting farm

Amendment to Gro-Bark operating licence appears on social services meeting agenda without warning

By IRENE GENTLE
The Champion

Something once smelled rotten in Milton and the Town's social services committee is willing to make a big stink to ensure it doesn't happen again.

Councillors reacted with alarm and restrained fury Monday night when an amended provisional certificate of approval allowing food waste composting at Gro-Bark Organics Inc. appeared as an innocuous receive-and-file item on the committee's agenda.

The item stirred up foul memories of a similar proposal that turned into a nightmare when Gro-Bark's 100 Britannia Rd. E. location was known as Scott Composting Farms in the early to mid-1990s.

In hopes of getting more information, the committee has directed staff to immediately appeal the certificate, issued by the Ministry of Environment (MOE).

"We want to make sure the community won't be put through the wringer," said Mayor Gord Krantz.

"It was a bad situation and we want to make sure it doesn't reoccur. We want not only information, but also assurances."

The past can of worms was opened in 1990

when farm owner Jim Scott launched his composting operation. It was licenced to include food waste in 1992.

With the emphasis on recycling, it seemed like a good idea at the time — good enough that Scott farms was handed a \$250,000 start-up grant from the Province.

But the process quickly turned into a migraine for residents as putrid smells settled in over the area to stay.

Attempts to shut down food waste composting culminated in a hearing which took too long and cost too much money, said Mr. Krantz.

"All of us went through hell for at least two years," he said. "You could smell that stuff a mile or two away. It was just rancid."

And it's something councillors are determined to not let happen again.

Councillor Rick Day proposed the appeal, which was eagerly supported by others around the table.

"This was absolutely a horrific experience for the community," said an aghast Councillor Brian Penman. "We had a nightmare experience in the past and I don't exaggerate."

Though new technology may curb smells this time around, there hasn't been enough information to quell the councillor's qualms, he added.

"I have no sense that anything has changed and these people have the expertise to get around the problems that happened last time," said Mr. Penman. "I have real reservations about this application given the history."

His uneasiness was shared by Councillor John Challinor.

"I think we have to shoot first and ask questions later," he said.

"This was the worst situation. It affected people's quality of life. We've got to stop this thing immediately."

He took aim at MOE officials who stood at the frontlines of the prior battle and whose names also appear on the newly-amended certificate.

Mr. Krantz agreed those officials could have warned Milton.

"Why they wouldn't have given us a heads up, I'm a little surprised at that," he said. "It's the same people we're dealing with."

One of those officials was John Budz, who works out of the MOE's Burlington office.

In an interview with The Champion Wednesday, Mr. Budz insisted there was no reason to contact the Town because a new application wasn't being made.

Since food waste composting has already been permitted on the site, all that showed up on the councillor's agenda was an amendment to that approval.

• see GRO-BARK on page 7

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In our March 1-7 and March 8-14 flyers, the following error occurred:

- The Frigidaire Easy Clean Range advertised on page 14 (Mar. 1-7) and page 6 (Mar. 8-14) for \$499.99, was misprinted as having a "fluorescent nightlight". This model does NOT have a fluorescent nightlight.

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