

Municipal Board Defers High Rise Decision At Steeles And Bayview

Ratepayers of Markham joined a delegation from North York at an Ontario Municipal Board hearing May 31, protesting a North York bylaw approved by the borough council in December, 1970, to change zoning of a parcel of land on Steeles Avenue east of Bayview Avenue to permit construction of high rise apartments.

Representing the Bayview-Glencrest Ratepayers, Lawyer Gary Smith told OMB Chairman Aloysius Kennedy that the immediate question should centre around the board's decision of June, 1970, that development in the area should be restricted to single family homes in order to preserve its present semi-rural character.

He would not call on members of the ratepayers association to speak, said Mr. Smith, because they would simply be repeating views recorded at the earlier hearing, protesting that the erection of high rise apartments on the south side of Steeles Avenue would have "a drastic impact on the existing environment", that the value of the high price homes in the southerly fringes of Markham would be seriously depreciated by such development.

Applications of three developers had been rejected, he pointed out, and the fact that the present applicant, Belmont Construction Company Limited of Toronto, had a different plan, did not alter the fact that it would be a high-rise development.

The hearing continued for two days as home owners from North York and their

representatives testified that all the maps and official plans for North York showed the area to be zoned for single family development, that enquiries by telephone and visits to the planning department in the borough offices gave no indication that there was any possibility of a change in zoning.

After hearing presentation from developers, municipal planners and ratepayers, Mr. Kennedy said on June 1 that he will announce the board's decision later.

In his presentation, Mr. Smith protested that, in asking for further consideration of the OMB decision a year ago, North York Mayor Basil Hall assured the ratepayers that the question of rezoning would be referred back to council only after the developer and the planning department had reached agreement with the people of the area.

The people had not been consulted, he charged, and it would be a breach of confidence to consider any new application.

Mr. Kennedy disagreed, "There is nothing to be gained by citing a proliferation of justifications. We are reserving a motion for review until after hearing the new applications."

North York Borough Solicitor Charles Onley told the hearing that the application is for a 39 acre parcel of land between the present housing and the St. Regis College property, facing onto Steeles Avenue between Old English Lane and Laurel Leaf Road. The previous ap-

plication said Mr. Onley, was for three 12 storey apartment buildings and 32 townhouses beginning 50 feet away from the back yards of single family homes. The new application would place eight storey buildings 150 feet from single family properties.

The proposed Moonhaven Avenue with 44 single family homes would come between the apartment development and the houses occupied at present, placing the apartments 448 feet from the rear yards of existing dwelling.

"The rear yard is part of today's living," observed Mr. Kennedy. "I am more concerned with the effect of high rise on the rear yard than its effect on the house."

In answer to the objections from the Markham side, Mr. Onley said the new application is for buildings 230 feet from Steeles Avenue. The previous application had buildings just 135 feet from the road.

Asked by the chairman what this would do to the people in Markham, Mr. Onley replied that their major concern was about the distance from Steeles Avenue and the mass of the building proposed. In the former plan the long side of three buildings faced Steeles Avenue. In the new application the buildings are turned at right angles to the road.

The plan approved by North York showed a tight cluster of three buildings, one eight-stories and two 12-stories at the northerly part of the property, and to the

south a five-storey building, a seven-storey building, and a row of townhouses on the property to the east, closest to the existing homes.

Further south, the developers' plan shows a recreation club and open space.

An alternative plan not described in the bylaw was presented at the hearing showing the buildings set back to the south and west, leaving more open space between the apartments and the single family homes.

This plan, Mr. Kennedy observed, seemed less objectionable to the people of the area, adding, "I am not recommending that it be accepted, just that it be considered."

This plan had not been viewed with favor by borough planners, said Mr. Onley, because the main entrance to the apartments would be from Bayview Avenue and could open the door to more apartments to the south. The area is now zoned "major institutional" with large attractive buildings surrounded by large expanses of open space.

The president of Steeles Heights Community Incorporated, formerly Steeles Heights Ratepayers Association, Stanley Gelman, 72 Bestview Drive, Willowdale, told the hearing that the homeowners are unequivocally opposed to any apartment development.

Belmont offered to guarantee that there will be no more high-rise buildings in the area; to pay all legal expenses in any ratepayer fight against high-rise within the next 12 years; \$60,000

for social amenities; representation for one ratepayer on the apartment's board of management.

At a meeting of members of the association May 20, however, the vote by secret ballot was 44 to 13 against the offer. Each household is entitled to one vote, Mr. Gelman explained.

Eight homeowners who had purchased property in the area between 1968 and 1970 testified that they had required of the borough's planning office about zoning in the area, and assured the chairman that they would not have bought their homes if they had known there was a possibility of high rise development.

When they bought their home in May, 1969, said Mrs. Doreen Brenner 36 Cove-wood Street, "we were literally fleeing from apartment buildings and wanted to be very sure that there would be no apartments on the vacant land around us."

None were informed that there had been applications brought to the borough as early as 1963 for high-rise development on Steeles Avenue between Bayview Avenue and Leslie Street.

Homes in the present development range from \$31,000 to \$75,000 said Mr. Gelman, with a mean sale price appraised at \$58,000.

The proposed development, he said, would violate the official plan for the area, with a population density of 40 percent over that approved in the plan.

The homes on the Markham side, said Mr. Smith,

are estate-type homes on large grounds and people who purchased land there in the late '60's were assured there would be no high-rise development directly to the south.

"A permanent record should be kept of all applications for rezoning," said Mr. Smith. "People who enquire should be informed of any applications for rezoning that are pending or have been considered."

Although they did not speak at the hearing, a few of the Markham residents who had testified at the earlier hearing were present, and Harold Chambers, 7095 Bayview Avenue, told "The Liberal", "We are opposed to apartments. Period."

Homes in this area north of Steeles Avenue are almost invisible from the roadway. They are large, attractive, and set in large lots with large trees and hedges on all sides.

North York Planning Officer Matthew Lawson argued that the Markham Town plan provides for high-rise development north of Steeles Avenue on Bayview, and pointed out that the alternative plan presented at the hearing would provide more open space to the north and east and would include a public park to the west. Because of the contour of the land, he said, the buildings would not interfere with the vista from single family homes.

A line of tall trees, he said, would separate the new development from the Markham homes, and the valley

land along the east branch of the Don River would become part of the open park system.

Markham Town Planner Kuno Hadaka told the hearing that the revised plan would be more acceptable to Markham homeowners than the previous plan, providing a set back of 200 feet between Steeles Avenue and the first building.

He agreed that Mr. Kennedy's suggestion of a slight re-alignment of the building to ensure that there would be no shadows cast on Markham, would be an improvement on the original plan, as would the increase in open parkland.

The Markham plan, he said, permits construction of buildings to a height of seven storeys adjacent to the railway overpass on Bayview Avenue, tapering down to single family homes, and affecting a very short stretch of land between Doncrest Avenue and the railway on the east side of the road about one half mile north of Steeles Avenue.

In summing up the case for the ratepayers, Mr. Gelman reiterated that the homeowners feel the original OMB decision should be preserved because they were not informed of a possibility of high rise development in the area.

They knew nothing about the first hearing, he said, "just what we read in the papers."

An affidavit was presented testifying to the fact that notices sent out to North York residents prior to that hearing, had not been received by the residents.

HEADFORD NEWS

Correspondent: FRANK TUCKER
Phone 889-2000

"The Liberal" is pleased to announce the appointment of Frank Tucker as its representative in Headford. Mr. Tucker will appreciate the co-operation of his neighbors in giving the news of this community. He can be reached by phoning 889-2000.

We, in the eastern portion of Richmond Hill, would suggest that two types of persons make up this town — those living in Headford and those who wish they did. Certainly we are very fortunate to have such a lovely countryside to enjoy this time of year. The church building has been the centre of the community for many years. These buildings in various communities have served as places of worship and for welding communities together. The psalmist could say: "I was glad when they said unto me — let us go into the house of the Lord."

You will find mentioned in the Bible the number 40 on numerous occasions — 40 days, 40 nights, 40 years wandering of the children of Israel, etc. And with many of the greats of yesteryear at the service in Headford United Church June 6 Martin Jenkinson, the pastor, ushered in his 41st year by reading from that wonderful book the lessons from Deuteronomy 8, verses 1-10 and St. John Chapter 20, verses 10-18. He spoke of the greatest of all robbers — death and the greatest of all victors — Christ, who has conquered death and taken the sting out of the grave.

Mr. Jenkinson entered the United Church ministry in St. Andrew's Seminary in Saskatoon in 1935 and served his 40 years at various communities throughout Canada. He has been at Headford since 1967. His 40 years of service and devotion were acknowledged by the congregation when Melvin Wellman presented him and his wife with a small gift at the close of the service.

The sons of the late Mr. and Mrs. Wesley Wellman—Donald, Dean and Charles—and their families met to remember the happy family times they enjoyed during the lifetime of their parents as they paid respect to mark a family anniversary at Victoria Square Church. Afterwards Melvin and family had a full house for lunch and get-together in the afternoon.

We congratulate Miss Rosemary Leek in passing her third year at York University.

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R. Hill Drop-In Has Problem — Youths Drop In, Don't Participate

Richmond Hill's experiment with a Drop-In Centre for youths is apparently petering out simply because there is apparently nothing to do but just "drop in".

At least this seemed to be the situation Thursday night of last week when youthful members of the Richmond Hill Drop-In Committee appeared before the 11 member Richmond Hill Parks and Recreation Committee under the chairmanship of Shaun Beggs.

Leader John Rance told the board that the Drop-In Centre has been dropped "over the last few weeks as we have been in the process of a re-evaluation of our set-up."

Rance told the committee he felt that a different attack should be made in regards to the local Drop-In Centres with the emphasis on certain specified programs with which to occupy the attention of the teenagers.

"We found", he said, "that a lot of the youths just come for a place to go, to get out of the street. It's quite frustrating for members of the committee. We don't feel we are achieving anything."

Rance offered a suggestion that the answer might lie in the procuring of a house in Richmond Hill where various activities could be mapped out for various rooms in the house.

"Perhaps we could have one room for playing cards or just sitting around with low-key stereo music, another where we could have a folk singer, or yet another for guest speakers. We could even set up an arts and crafts room."

He said that programs in such a house would be held at certain times of the week and close at midnight. He assured the committee it wouldn't be a hostel type of arrangement.

The essence of the matter, as explained by Rance, seemed to be that the youths using the Drop-In Centre weren't contributing or co-operating with members of the committee which left too much of a burden on the members.

Up to a few weeks ago, the centre had been held at Our Lady Queen of the World Roman Catholic Church. The drop-in concept was started in November of 1969 at the same church, later moved to Wrixon Hall at St. Mary's Anglican and last summer was held at the Richmond Hill Arena.

Also present at the meeting were representatives of an Oak Ridges youth group wanting to start a similar Drop-In Centre there. Spokesman was John Watt.

The committee will be discussing the matter in the future with a view toward staging a one-day seminar with the purpose of discussing the whole concept of Drop-In Centres and how they should be programed.

Both the Richmond Hill and Oak Ridges area committees are expected to participate.

In other business, the parks and recreation committee named June 24 as the date for the official opening ceremonies of the newly "roofed" Centennial Pool on Newkirk Road.

Some discussion was also held on how to combat an acoustics problem at the new pool since it has been enclosed.

Parks and Recreation Administrator Al White reported that the din was deafening and that "you can't hear the buzzer or whistles."

Some ideas were discussed on how to cushion the noise with the result that further investigation will be carried out to ascertain the methods used by other pools and the costs.

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