

GOVERNMENT: Congregation's search leads to 15th property

# Business park no place for church: town staff

BY SANDRA BOLAN  
sbolan@yrmg.com

Thirteen appropriately-zoned properties have been deemed either inefficient, inappropriate, too big, not prominent enough and/or unavailable.

No. 14 is perfect but not zoned for a place of worship. An application has been submitted to the town for re-zoning.

Now a 15th location has come to light, which Stouffville Pentecostal Church trustees are considering. Tuesday night, a representative of the church requested and was granted a deferral until Oct. 1.

The timing could not have been better, as Whitchurch-Stouffville council was set to rule that night on whether or not to accept the church's re-zoning application of four acres in Hoover Park Drive's Beacon Hill Business Park.

A staff report recommended council deny the application.

"It doesn't mean that council has to accept that report," the church's pastor, Jeff Laird, told The Sun-Tribune Wednesday. "We have to either find another site or make a strong case for why a church fits on that spot."

The parcel of property in question is currently zoned as employment land,

which allows for such things as offices, manufacturing, warehousing, a hotel, convention/banquet facility and commercial school, but no churches.

"... the land use program for this area was designed to concentrate upon more intensive employment-generating business park uses, in recognition of the town's limited supply of serviced employment areas," according to a June 18 council report.

## EMPLOYMENT LANDS NEEDED

Between 2012 and 2031, 4,200 jobs are expected to be accommodated on employment-specific lands.

A recent growth management study on land inventory revealed the municipality has 388 net acres of vacant employment lands. Just over half (52 per cent) of those lands are fully serviced and located in Stouffville, according to a Sept. 3 council report.

Based on projected employment growth to 2031 and its land needs, there will be a shortage of 173 net acres of serviced employment lands, according to the council report.

One resident to speak out against the church's proposed move to the Beacon Hill Business Park is former town councillor Wilf Morley, who claimed, in an e-mail to the town's

planning department, that by allowing a church to move on to this particular piece of employment land, the municipality would lose tax revenue.

Not so, according to Mr. Laird.

Places of worship are exempt from paying property taxes, however, the town's lost income on these four acres would be made up for by the money earned on the church's Main Street land and the 12 acres on Tenth Line it recently sold to a developer.

"I don't think there is going to be too much of a tax problem," Mr. Laird said.

Trustees want to re-locate the church because its current location is too small, despite a renovation in 1984 that doubled its size. The facility is also multi-level, which is problematic to parishioners with mobility issues. The church is proposed to be primarily one level.

If the 15th location is deemed acceptable and a purchase agreement can be worked out, the re-zoning application will be withdrawn, according to Mr. Laird.

But if that is not the case, he said they will make a decision on their next steps upon hearing council's decision Oct. 1. That meeting starts at 7 p.m.



STAFF PHOTO/JIM MASON

The congregation at Stouffville Pentecostal Church has outgrown its east-end building. A new location is being sought.

7, Stouffville Sun-Tribune ■ www.yorkregion.com ■ Saturday, Sept. 7, 2013

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