

# MAYOR DEFENDS NOT SIGNING FILL BYLAW

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Whitchurch-Stouffville Mayor Justin Altmann refused to sign a document into law because he “wasn’t comfortable with the information presented.”

Instead, deputy mayor and Ward 3 Councillor Hugo Kroon signed the bylaw, which made an amendment to the fill management plan for a site on 14245 Ninth Line (a property owned by United Soils Inc.), allowing “acceptable fill from small quantity source sites and hydro-excavation trucks,” as written in the council report.

“I wasn’t comfortable signing,” Altmann said. “During the meeting, I’d asked if council would respectfully defer it for two weeks so I could gain more information and clarity, I was denied that so I was uncomfortable signing it because I wanted more information.”

It was at a meeting on Aug. 23 that council discussed, debated and eventually passed the motion. But Altmann and Councillors Iain Lovatt and Rob Hargrave remained against the motion after asking consultant Julia Risi several questions which remained unanswered, according to the mayor.

The mayor cites the Municipal Act section 226.1 where the mayor is responsible to “participate in and foster activities that enhance the economic, social and environmental well-being of the municipality and its residents” as a justification for his refusal to sign.

But Kroon says the mayor ignored his “legislative responsibility” as head of council.

“Obviously he didn’t agree with the will of council,” he said. “My concern with the issue is that there is a legislative requirement on behalf of the head of council to sign bylaws when it’s the will of council.”

“The biggest thing that bothers me is we have a legislative responsibility that we swore

an oath to, for some reason or another, some people seem to think that doesn’t mean anything,” Kroon added.

The decision to allow “hydrovac” trucks to dump on the site led to some residents to create a protest group on Facebook. The “Hydrovac Protest Group” spiked with 400+ members, including the mayor and many he had invited, but the group is now closed.

Brian Sankarsingh, a member of the Facebook group and a member of the Whitchurch-Stouffville Citizen Environment Protection Group – which started the Facebook group – says that though the protest group is closed, the cause is still alive.

“Admins and core members have unanimously and collectively decided to close this page down within the next 24 hours,” Sankarsingh wrote in the protest group’s last post.

“This does not mean that we’ve abandoned this cause. It does not mean that we’ve given up. It certainly does not mean that we’ve disbanded the group. It does mean that now this group can fully focus on formulating our strategy, investigating the issue and determining the next steps without a cacophony of competing interests tainting the conversation.”

Now that Kroon has signed the bylaw, the United Soils fill site is permitted to allow hydrovac trucks. Owner Alec Cloke has stressed to The Sun-Tribune that the hydrovac trucks operation is “clean” and they are “not contaminated”.

Altmann says four council votes would be required to bring the bylaw back for review and the mayor remains firm on his decision and continues to “do more research and more investigating” regarding the hydrovac trucks.

All members of council were asked for comment on the issue by The Sun-Tribune. Only Altmann and Kroon responded.

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Justin Altmann,  
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MAYOR JUSTIN ALTMANN



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