

King's Official Plan reaches final stages

By Mark Pavilons

King has reached a pivotal point in its history. Council gave the green light to tweaks by York Region to its long-awaited Official Plan. With a couple of site-specific additions, the Our King planning document will be in the hands of York Region, awaiting final approval this fall. Several planning consultants, representing landowners in King, wanted their parcels given special consideration within the OP. Council did agree to include logistical changes to two properties on the Aurora Lloydtown Road (Capobianco-Turner) to recognize their unique situation. Councillors also agreed to eliminate the deferral on a Laskay property. The Capobianco-Turner properties exist as two separate addresses with two homes. The plan is to sever the 22-acre parcel to recognize this long-standing situation. The owners have no plans to develop the property, but merely wanted the logistics sorted out at this time. Planner Brad Rogers said King can permit lot creation and he doesn't see this as setting a precedent, due to its unique nature. Councillors agreed that it meets all the conditions of two separate lots and have been working with the owners for many years on sorting this out. Planning director Stephen Naylor did point out in this particular case, it goes against provincial policy and the Township's legal experts agreed. While the Township wants to make this change, it can't under the legislation. Naylor pointed out the Township has to apply the rules set out by the Province at the local level. This is where councillors raised their objections, and supported the application. Councillor Bill Cober said he was "sick" of provincial policy. Queen's Park is giving municipalities the authority to make local planning decisions, and yet under PPS2020, they're hands are tied. "Let's make this happen," Cober said. King passed its Official Plan back in September of 2019, following years of legwork and extensive public consultation. The OP establishes a detailed policy framework to guide growth and development in King's three villages, hamlets and the rural area for a planning horizon of 2031. It has been decades since the OP has been updated. York Region, the upper approval authority, has been reviewing the OP to make sure it conforms with York's OP and follows all provincial policies and regulations. As a result of the review, York made a few modifications to bring it into conformity. Staff noted the OP doesn't take effect until York gives it the stamp of approval, anticipated for this September. After that, there's a 20-day appeal period, so the OP will come into force in October. A lot of the modifications have to do with provincial policies, such as Bill 108, and a new Provincial Policy Statement (PPS 2020) which took effect May 1. Staff pointed out the majority of the changes are minor in nature, and help improve the clarity of policies, without altering the overall policy direction. Some of the changes included clarifications of future growth in the Nobleton Village Reserve area; employment growth forecasts, and hamlet boundary expansions as per the provincial Growth Plan. Other tweaks included natural hazards, land use compatibility, on-farm diversified uses. King, York and conservation staff have worked together to develop modifications for the Natural Heritage System (NHS) to strengthen the policies and provide clarification. There are some village site-specific policy areas that will be added to the OP to reflect recent LPAT decisions in King City. The Township did receive public comments and submission prior to the recent council meeting. Residents raised some concerns regarding population forecasts for Nobleton, which is expected to grow to a total of 6,750 by 2031. Several submissions were also received from landowners outside of the urban area of Nobleton. Currently, the Nobleton Village Reserve is not planned to accommodate any significant growth in this time frame. King refined and delineated the boundaries of hamlets within the Greenbelt area, an exercise that began many years ago with the Oak ridges Moraine Conservation Act. Three submissions were received regarding lands in Laskay. Westlin Farms asked to be kept within the hamlet boundary and designated as a rural area. It's subject to an outstanding appeal to York's OP and the Region recommended a site-specific deferral. This is where council stepped in and recommended this deferral be removed. Regarding growth in King's hamlets, all are planned as residential communities, with appropriate and compatible small-scale commercial and employment uses. Staff noted the hamlets are anticipated to accommodate limited growth in the form of infilling, in a manner that protects and enhances their unique identities and ensures that they remain distinct from the Township's Villages. King has seven hamlets, and four of these have significant vacant tracts of land, designed Hamlet Rural Area. Staff are considering the locations for future uses such as hamlet residential, commercial and employment, through site-specific OPAs. The proposed modifications approved by council will head to the Region, to be approved by staff. Once York Region Council makes its decision, the 20-day appeal period follows.