

Motion to slow Marylake plans withdrawn

By Mark PavilonsEditor

Plans for a long term care facility at Marylake will continue to move ahead. A motion by Councillor Debbie Schaefer to repeal recent minor variance approvals by the Committee of Adjustment, was ultimately withdrawn, after a marathon council session Monday night that went into the early morning hours. The motion, which called for a 'stay' of committee approvals, providing more time for public discussion, was withdrawn, following a closed door session in which councillors were given legal advice. When councillors emerged, Schaefer withdrew the motion, noting there's still some satisfaction that a tremendous exchange of information occurred during the council meeting. She said she learned a great deal (especially during the closed session) and it was a 'worthwhile evening.' Councillor Jordan Cescolini said she appreciated Schaefer's motion, which was intended to generate a full discussion on the issue. Councillor Jennifer Anstey, who seconded Schaefer's original motion, said they did achieve the intended discussion at council. She had a 'ton of questions?' she needed answers to. She reported that staff will report back to council, providing an in-depth update on many contentious issues regarding the proposal. The Township solicitor will provide information on planning, legal and other uses surrounding the Marylake proposal. The motion had requested that King council revisit the circumstances that allowed for the progression of development at Marylake by the Augustinian Fathers (Ontario) Inc. (AFOI). Echoing the concerns voiced by residents of King Township at last month's Committee of Adjustment meetings, the motion alleged that the council has not provided a formal decision on the past legal and non-conforming continuous use at Marylake Monastery, which affirms the need for an open, transparent, and public decision-making process. It also questioned the legal precedent being set by King Township regarding development on the Oak Ridges Moraine. The Concerned Citizens of King Township (CCKT), the Kingscross Ratepayers Association (KRA), The Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust (ORMLT), and Save the Oak Ridges Moraine (STORM) all oppose the plan, noting this proposal does not conform with the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan as required by the ORM Conservation Act. Many people appeared before council both opposing and supporting the application. At the heart of the discussion was whether a long term care use was historically occurring on the site, which gives credence to the application. The motion pointed out: In December 2020 AFOI requested endorsement by Council for a Ministerial Zoning Order (MZO) on their Mary Lake property to enable the establishment of a long-term care facility, a hotel, a conference centre and a banquet hall to be built on a Natural Core Area and Countryside Area of the Oak Ridges Moraine. This request was firmly rejected by King Township Council. At this time, it was recommended that AFOI, King Township representatives, and stakeholders enter into a roundtable discussion in order to establish potential future uses of the site. AFOI agreed to stop pursuing an MZO and enter a roundtable discussion. Returning to the fore in December 2022, the highly contentious recommendation to affirm long-term care as a pre-existing use of the Mary Lake site was used to justify a revised development application by the AFOI. Under the ORMCP, if the AFOI is capable of legally proving long-term care as pre-existing use on the site prior to the enactment of the ORMCP, the conservation plan allows for minor development. In its current state, the AFOI is proposing a major expansion to the current 400-seat shrine and monastery to include a 3-story LTC centre featuring 160 beds across 128 units within 40 metres of Mary Lake, as well as 150 parking spaces across two surface lots.