

Stewards pleased Township on their side

By Mark Pavilons

Recommendations by King Township staff to refuse a bid for a rural banquet facility comes as good news to the citizen's group opposing the proposal.

George Puccia, president of the Stewards of the Moraine Inc., said they're pleased to see that staff recommendations are in line with their stance. The proposed facility, the group has argued from the outset, just doesn't fit in King or within any governing piece of legislation.

The official plan amendment and zoning bylaw amendment applications submitted by Peter Eliopoulos concern a 49-hectare (121-acre) parcel of land located in the Oak Ridges Moraine at 3550 18th Sideroad. The property is located on the west side of Highway 400 between the 18th Sideroad and Lloydtown-Aurora Road.

The applicant submitted the revised application to the Township in March 2011. The outdoor banquet facility would include three garden areas for the purposes of holding wedding events with each garden having a hosting capacity of 200 persons (600 person total) together with three designated parking areas planned to accommodate a total of 440 vehicles. Reception areas would be supported by tents and a total of 60 staff. The development also includes a new caretaker dwelling measuring approximately 900 square metres with provision for it to be used as a bed and breakfast establishment. The applications further propose to establish a children's camp for a maximum capacity of 400 users and includes the construction of a mess hall (about 500 square metres) and an activity building (about 700 square metres). Playing fields are also shown on the concept site plan for the lands.

Staff did support redesignating the lands from prime agriculture to rural, but this more of a technicality, since York Region had already given the green light to this change.

The applicant filed an appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board in February on the basis that the Township failed to make a decision on the applications within 180 days.

The current staff report, which will be discussed at council Aug. 26, will be the Township's position for the OMB hearing.

Puccia said in his opinion, the Township didn't drag its heels on this application, it simply took time to gather all the pertinent information and data.

While the OMB will receive and listen to the submissions, that doesn't mean it's a slam dunk for opponents.

Puccia said ideally, the applicant would see this as a tough battle to fight, and withdraw the application, saving everyone a lot of time and money.

While the council meeting promises to be action-packed with many delegations, Puccia doesn't see this as "contentious" for the simple reason there's little to no support for the plan.

This issue is the Stewards' raison d'etre ? residents simply had to draw a line in the sand and take a stand. But Puccia said if future issues warrant, the group will remain operating, ready to fight.

For more on the Stewards, contact Dr. Maret Aun 905-727-6125, maun@rogers.com; George Puccia, 905-713-5555, gpuccia.ca@bellnet.ca; Anthony Mathias, 905-841-1693, agmat@hotmail.ca; David Donnelly, 416-572-0464, david@donnellylaw.ca.