

Public provides input in King's official plan review

By Angela Gismondi

The Township of King is undergoing an official plan review.

A special council meeting was held recently at The Country Day School in King City to get input from the public and council regarding what items should be included as part of the review.

An official plan is a strategic document for guiding land use and development in the Township and contains vision, goals and objectives for land and resources and how municipality will grow over the long-term, explained Sarah Allin, policy planner with the Township of King.

Prior to revising the official plan the Planning Act requires that council holds a special meeting to hear and receive submission in regards to the proposed revisions. The purpose of the meeting was to provide a forum for the receipt of public comments in order to ensure the Township's Official Plan reflects the needs of the community. Staff was also seeking council's direction on how to proceed in the process.

The planning act requires official plans be reviewed and updated every five years to ensure the plans conform to provincial plans and are consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement.

King's current official plan, which was issued in 1970, is comprised of the parent plan and the secondary for five of King's hamlet areas (Ansnorveldt, Kettleby, Laskay, Pottageville, and Snowball), and the settlement areas of King City, Nobleton, and Schomberg. The proposed approach for the Official Plan Review is to develop a new comprehensive Parent Official Plan and bring King's official plan documents into conformity with the Greenbelt Plan and the Growth Plan.

The current relationship between the Parent Official Plan (1970) and the secondary plans is relatively weak, as the Parent Official Plan merely defers to the applicable secondary plan, said Allin. It is envisioned that a new overarching Parent Official Plan will be developed through the initial phase of the Official Plan Review to provide unified direction through broader policies to the existing more detailed secondary plans.

The meeting focused on the Introductory Discussion Paper for the Official Plan Review. The purpose of the Introductory Discussion Paper, released on Oct. 29, is to initiate dialogue on the need for a review of the Township of King Official Plan and the revisions that may be required as part of the Official Plan Review. The Discussion Paper includes an outline of the need for an official plan review, an overview of King's existing official plan documents, description of current provincial legislation and regional policy, and an outline of additional matters that impact King's policy documents.

Some of the topics which will be considered for King's Official Plan Review include but are not limited to population and employment growth, residential Intensification, cultural heritage preservation, financial security, infrastructure capabilities and needs, agricultural lands, economic development opportunities, sustainable development, efficient use of resources and natural heritage protection and enhancement.

Greg Locke, representing Concerned Citizens of King Township, thanked Township staff for initiating the review.

We are very pleased to see our Official Plan undergo this significant review, said Locke, adding the review is long overdue and much needed in the municipality.

One of the major concerns the group has is the possibility of the rezoning of the King Road and Highway 400 lands to industrial/commercial development. Those lands are currently part of the Greenbelt and cannot be touched until after the review of the Greenbelt Plan in 2015, Locke pointed out.

We believe strongly that bringing the 'big pipe' to the 400 would open up all the surrounding lands and Laskay, said Locke. The King Road/400 interchange will likely become another one of the big commercial interchanges along 400 ... King Township will be well on its way to becoming an 'urbanized' municipality and the area around King City will simply become a northern extension of Vaughan.

We believe it's premature to identify new serviced lands for growth unless and until there is a clear and identified need. We don't see this occurring within the 20-year planning horizon.

Jamie Reaume, representing farmers in the Holland Marsh, said it's time for the Township to bring the Official Plan up to date. He urged council to put together a plan that does what's best for King Township and it's farming community.

We do want to see changes made that benefit the farming community and agriculture alongside your uniqueness and character, said Reaume. We will be involved in this process from start to finish. It will be from the farmers' perspective, from the marsh perspective. We need to develop a plan that looks at the next 20 years and provides valuable insight for the next generation that's going to be around for it.

Susan Swail said the Official Plan review is an opportunity for King.

“King’s plan can be more restrictive than provincial plans but we can also be more creative,” said Swail. “Let’s take this opportunity to make a more unique and sustainable community.”

She also could not understand how “land so rich can be so poor in assessment. This is a discrepancy we need to address,” she said.

Councillor Avia Eek agreed the agricultural land in the Township needs to be preserved and protected.

“Once that prime agricultural land is gone, it’s gone and it’s not coming back,” said Eek.

Councillor Debbie Schaefer said the Official Plan needs to address the increasing demand for parking at the GO train station in King City.

“That demand is only going to grow over the years,” she said.

She also asked that the plan include a section on energy infrastructure in the Township.

Councillor Cleve Mortelliti said the plan should include information on trying to maintain character in the existing subdivisions in King.

Staff is expected to report back to council on the Official Plan Review within the next few months. Public input is encouraged throughout the process. For questions or comments email officialplanreview@king.ca.