

Emotions run high; committee nixes larger house in Kettleby

By Mark Pavilons

It all came down to following a bylaw and maintaining the character of a community.

A larger new home was refused at King's committee of adjustment last week, following public outcry and a petition from village residents. The meeting last Wednesday night became boisterous at times and some observers would say it was not the best display.

The lot is situated on a rise off of Kettleby Road, across the street from Christ Church.

Applicants were seeking relief from the Township bylaw to increase the size of their home, exceeding the maximum permitted by 45 square metres and adding a partial second storey.

The Kettleby Village Association gathered signatures and members were in attendance to voice their objections.

The KVV was 'relieved' the application was shot down.

The group is 'dismayed' at what they see is a 'subjective interpretation' by the planning staff of vague wording in the bylaw, which doesn't fully indicate the spirit and intent of what 'in keeping' with a village's makeup is meant to portray.

The group bears no ill will toward the property owners, or anyone else who chooses to live in the area.

'KVA hopes to have the opportunity to work with owners, architects, and township staff and committees to ensure that the spirit and intent of the bylaw is protected in the final site plan approvals for the remaining five homes,' according to a statement from KVA.

'Through cooperation and consultation we look forward to welcoming six new families into our community. We welcome new neighbours and would like to see them embrace the essence of our village as we do.'

The owners have been asked to redesign their home with the maximum size in mind.

According to KVA's Christy Pieroway, while this can be considered a victory, 'I do not think anyone who attended last night is rejoicing at all.'

'The new owners are naturally very upset that they are not going to get their dream house they have been carefully planning for months.'

'It was a great disappointment and the hamlet's reaction to the proposed building was a huge surprise to them. You can imagine, if you did not have all the history about this village's heritage preservation fight to date and, if you were surrounded by people assuring you this could be built, this would be a blow. Hopefully in time, it will not feel so personal for the new owners, and they will better understand that we are just trying to protect our collective 'home' Kettleby.'

The Committee of Adjustment, she said, has encouraged residents to communicate much better with their new neighbours and work together.

According to Councillor Debbie Schaefer, there is unhappiness on part of many members of the community that the six building lots were created. Further, many of those people felt that the site specific zoning bylaw which was created to address the worries about inappropriately large homes being built was not tough enough. Hence, an application for a variance to increase size was salt in a wound not yet healed as barely three years have passed, she observed.

'There are some who have simply not accepted the decision to create the lots and they feel there is something to be gained by re-hashing arguments presented unsuccessfully several years ago. Ironically, by doing so they actually hurt the cause as it just fuels more emotion as opposed to encouraging rationale thinking,' she said.

The councillor also felt the proponents had no idea about the history of the area or how passionate residents are about their village.

Frustration with the process

The mandate of the Committee of Adjustment is to look at floor space, but residents wanted to discuss and debate setbacks, aesthetics, design, etc.

Concerned Citizens of King Township saw this as a victory, but the win was 'bitter-sweet.'

According to Greg Locke, CCKT chair, this matter has exposed weaknesses in the current development processes and tools.

'Kettleby is not at peace, their harmony has been sadly disturbed,' he remarked.

'This unfortunate case demonstrates how critical our upcoming Official Plan review is, to make sure our planning tools all sing from the same song sheet. The hamlet plan supposedly governing development in Kettleby is currently a stand-alone document, simply 'deferred' to by our current Official Plan. It has no teeth. Builders and developers 'refer' to it, staff encourage it, but time and time again they simply do what they want, with little meaningful recourse by staff or council. A similar story plays out for all our community plans and design guidelines.'

This case, Locke explained, was governed by local expectations of elements of the bylaw allowing 'respectful' growth and maintaining 'harmony.'

Locke noted what's most unfortunate, is that several years ago Kettleby residents attempted to have their hamlet declared a Heritage Conservation District, a designation shared by Kleinburg and Unionville. The protections this designation offers would have likely prevented this very sort of thing from happening. It failed.

He said perhaps the community can give new thought to re-exploring this option. Schomberg's Main Street commercial/residential district would do well to consider the same.

Good management and communication can go a long way to avoiding these situations. But if anything, this example shows how important it is that our planning tools be integrated and strengthened so that vagueness, interpretation and downright political influence are further removed from the process, to the betterment of our communities, Locke stressed.

Locke encourages residents to become engaged in such issues, and press the point to their local councillors. He suggests that sensitive Committee of Adjustment matters be directed to council for debate.