

Council supports Nobleton residents' request for sewers

By Angela Gismondi

Residents living on Nobleview Drive could be getting sewers.

In a close vote at the Committee of the Whole meeting Monday, four members of council supported a petition-based request by Nobleview Drive property owners for the construction of sanitary sewers and associated road reconstruction as a local improvement project. While residents were hoping council would agree to include the works in the 2015 budget, which is slated to come before council at the Jan. 26 meeting, council decided debt financing the project was a better option. The costs will be borne by the benefitting property owners and the project will not impact the 2015 budget.

The 18 homes on the Nobleton street were not included in the Nobleton sanitary sewer construction project because they are in the wellhead protection area, a land area regulated to prevent contamination of a well or well-field supplying a public water system. Nobleview residents argue they live on the closest street to the pumping station and they should have been included in phase one of sewer installation. They urged council to install the sewers on their street in advance of phase two.

Residents first came forward with the request in March 2014. In September, staff presented a report to the Committee of the Whole outlining steps to be taken with respect to the petition. Staff was directed to undertake detailed engineering design for Nobleview Drive. However, with five of the seven members of council running for re-election, staff did not have the requisite authorization to deploy unbudgeted financial resources required to engage an external consulting engineering firm to complete the detailed engineering design for the Nobleview Drive local improvement project. The cost is estimated at about \$28,000 per household. In the report presented at Monday's meeting, staff recommended including Nobleview in the comprehensive engineering design work for phase two of the Nobleton sanitary sewer construction project, and that staff be directed to proceed, in 2015, with engaging an independent consulting engineer to complete engineering design drawings and associated project costing for phase two. But Nobleview residents don't want to be included in phase two, recognizing the longer they wait, the higher the cost will be to install the system.

"We were inexplicably omitted from phase one," said Nobleview resident Dave Huxtable, adding staff took the "easy way out" by recommending the street be included with phase two. "If we were to wait until phase two, it would be \$15,000 more, which is double what the original residents paid. Nobleview Drive residents are ready to go. Our street has been paying taxes and continues to contribute to infrastructure for 43 years with little or no infrastructure on our street. We think it's our turn now. We know we're going to be paying more but it's an important project to us."

Councillor Cleve Mortelliti explained that when sewers were needed in Nobleton, it became apparent that the Township could not afford to service the entire community. In fact, Mortelliti explained, the Township had to go to the Ontario Municipal Board to increase its debt ceiling just to fund the first phase of the project.

"The line had to be drawn somewhere," Mortelliti pointed out.

Alessio Sinapi came before council asking for a decision on the matter either way. He is building a new home on the street and is not sure whether he should install a septic system or wait for sewers. The new build is 60 per cent complete and he is hoping to move in by the end of the year.

Donato Lisozzi also made a deputation at the meeting. He was not pleased with staff's recommendation to include Nobleview with phase two.

"Quite honestly and quite frankly, that was not the intent of the petition," he said, adding if the residents wanted to be included in phase two, they wouldn't have brought the petition forward last March. "If you rewind to March, one of the challenges we had is that the 2014 budget was already passed."

He asked that funding for the project be included in the 2015 budget.

"We feel we have done everything council has asked us to do," he said. "The scale of this project is such that it does not have a huge impact on phase two."

As a resident of phase two, Susan Zuccharo is opposed to moving the Nobleview project ahead.

"I'm very anxious to obtain my sewer connection," said Zuccharo, adding installing sewers on Nobleview will delay the project for the over 350 homes in phase two. "Phase two is to be done in a comprehensive manner not in a phase by phase basis. I believe they all should be dealt with together in terms of servicing. Adding this in isolation will set a precedent and increase the cost for the remainder of phase two residents."

In terms of the impact on the 2015 budget, the Nobleview Drive local improvement project is estimated to cost \$622,150 and, if approved, would be incorporated into the draft 2015 capital budget as an incremental program change with associated impact on tax

capital reserve funding. It would require an increase of \$622,150 or 3.14 per cent in tax capital reserve funding for 2015.

According to the staff report, the \$1.8 million draft capital budget project list for 2015 has already been significantly reduced by staff to help keep the tax rate down.

Ward 2 Councillor David Boyd said he heard a lot of concerns about the cost and timeline for the project when he was campaigning for the election. He recognizes the importance of moving forward with the engineering design and financial analysis of the project.

‘We need to provide solid answers for the residents of phase two,’ said Boyd. ‘There is a lot of room for misinterpretation.’

Councillor Cleve Mortelliti said including Nobleview in phase two is the fair thing to do.

‘I think the recommendation to look at the design comprehensively is the right one for the very reason of ensuring that we look at the remainder of phase two in a comprehensive way ? and not negatively impacting other residents in phase two,’ said Mortelliti, adding efforts could be made to expedite the Nobleview project.

A motion was tabled to approve the staff recommendation to proceed with engaging an independent consulting engineer in 2015 to complete engineering design drawings and associated project costing for Phase 2 (including Nobleview Drive) of the Nobleton sanitary sewer construction project. The motion failed.

Mayor Steve Pellegrini had some specific questions about the Nobleview project. Most importantly, Pellegrini wanted to make sure the project would not have an adverse affect on flows. According to Mike Cole, manager of engineering and development at the Township of King, the project would not impact flows from an engineering point of view. He also said staff has undertaken a detailed design for the project and the design can go to tender later this year or early next year, however, a peer review of the design must be completed first. Instead of funding the project through the 2015 budget, Pellegrini suggested debt financing, which is how the Township funded the other sewer projects.

‘This group has done everything we asked,’ said Pellegrini. ‘I’m going to suggest to them that if they want to move ahead of the rest of phase two, they have to pay the carrying costs of \$600,000, our interest on the \$600,000 debt.’

He urged council to support moving Nobleview forward.

‘We have led these people along for over a year,’ said Pellegrini. ‘The design work is done, it doesn’t compromise the flows ? that was one of my biggest concerns. Having phase two designed with Nobleview upfront doesn’t make a difference.’

Pellegrini also pointed out that while the cost for phase two is estimated at over \$37,000, the Township is going to do its best to secure government funding to bring the cost down.

‘I’m not going to ask any resident of Nobleton for \$40,000; it’s unjust,’ said Pellegrini. ‘I’m hopeful there will be some federal funding available.’

Councillor Bill Cober pointed out the importance of getting the costing for phase two completed, especially if the Town hopes to get funding for the project.

‘If we’re going to get funding we need to be shovel-ready,’ added Cober.

Cober also asked that a holding tank be installed for the resident who is building a new home.

Councillor Debbie Schaefer was concerned about moving forward with the Nobleview project before knowing how it will impact phase two. She was informed that it will take three to six months to get the financial implications for phase two and that council would be asked to make a decision on the Nobleview matter before that.

‘We simply don’t have enough information to make a decision,’ said Schaefer. ‘I will continue to feel uncomfortable and think it’s inappropriate to make that decision without knowing the impact on phase two.’

Mortelliti agreed.

‘By breaking it out like this, you are doing a disservice to a multitude of residents,’ said Mortelliti.

Councillor Linda Pabst pointed out sewers in Nobleton have been an issue since she first became councillor in the mid ‘90s. At the time it was going to cost \$8,500.

‘I supported the sewers back then and I support them now,’ said Pabst. ‘Let’s move ahead.’

Pellegrini made a motion to move forward with the Nobleview sanitary sewer local improvement project. Staff was directed to retain the consultant necessary to undertake the peer review of the design and to proceed with the tender process once the peer review is completed. Once all the information is gathered, staff will consult with the Nobleview property owners to confirm whether or not they agree to the proposed cost and to pay the interest on the debt financing. The motion carried.

‘The clear message we’re sending to residents of Nobleview tonight is that we’re going to move ahead to get you closer to the financial decision, but it is your decision,’ explained Township CAO Susan Plamondon.

Council also approved the original staff recommendation to retain an independent consulting engineer in 2015 to complete engineering design drawings and associated project costing for Phase 2 of the Nobleton sanitary sewer construction project, subject

to budget approval.