

Residents engaged in issues at Nobleton session

By Mark Pavilons

The public is not shy about coming out and airing their concerns.

More than two dozen citizens came out swinging at the first Meet the Mayor and Ward Councillors' night of the new term, held last Tuesday night in Nobleton. Led by Mayor Steve Pellegrini and Councillors David Boyd and Linda Pabst, the informal event led to a very healthy, frank discussion on local issues.

Mayor Pellegrini was in his element, talking to the group, providing comprehensive details and explanations on inquiries and concerns.

From the cost of sewers and local traffic concerns, to development charges and growth, the exchanges were lively and light, leaving residents with plenty of food for thought.

The second phase of the sewers in Nobleton is almost shovel-ready and currently the cost is pegged at upwards of \$39,000 per household, exclusive of hookups, permits and decommissioning of septic systems. The cost is double that of phase one.

"I'm not going to ask residents for \$40,000," Pellegrini stressed. "It's not fair. We're doing our best to bring the cost down."

The Township hopes to leverage grants and development charge reserves to soften the blow.

Former Councillor Peter Grandilli asked what the ideal amount would be and Pellegrini said he'd like it around the \$20,000 mark.

Some long-time residents have perfectly good septic systems and many don't like being forced on municipal water and sewers.

King's 45-year-old Official Plan is currently under review and it will bring together all master plans and Community Improvement Plans to streamline the process and set the future direction of King.

Nobleton is pegged to grow to 6,500; Schomberg is slated to reach 3,000 and King City will grow to 12,000 people. The urban boundaries are all set, so all the possible growth will take place within these boundaries, as infilling.

The former wrecking yard on King Road at the western edge of Nobleton will be home to 150 units. It will include some smaller homes as local residents expressed a desire to downsize and require affordable accommodations. Pellegrini pointed out King residents are "asset rich," with the average home valued at \$1.7 million.

The Township doesn't cave in to developers, but rather gets everything they can from them. Development charges are high, as are the standards demanded by the municipality. "It's very expensive to build in King," the mayor observed.

The DCs put in reserves are used to offset the hard infrastructure costs.

Pellegrini noted there are a few pockets that could be developed, including two, 100-parcels north of MacTaggart. But, the numbers are set for Nobleton, so it's unlikely we'll see anything materialize. As well, 99% of King lies in either the Greenbelt or the Oak Ridges Moraine, limiting any kind of development.

King has roughly 900 residential units left in its provincial allotment and the mayor observed nearby Vaughan can put up that many homes in a single day.

The bulk (95%) of the Township's revenue comes from property taxes and what's needed is more industrial and commercial development.

One resident questioned the Township's enforcement of bylaws, especially property standards in rural residential areas.

The mayor said they do investigate complaints or suspected illegal uses and often they are brought to court. He urged residents to report anything suspicious, adding the process often takes a long time and residents may not see the enforcement on a day to day basis.

The age-old concerns about traffic through Nobleton were brought up and the mayor noted York Region is currently working on a traffic master plan. They're reviewing the Highway 27 and King intersection; King Road and 11th Concession and King and Weston Road crossroads.

Residents will likely see a remedy coming this summer - a slip lane allowing east-bound traffic on King to flow around left-turners onto the 11th.

The Township maintains 308 kilometres of gravel and hard-surfaced roads in King. The mayor said Miller Sideroad desperately needs a hard surface because it's costing a lot in time and resources to continually grade this stretch. For residents wanting their rural road paved, he told them to be careful what they wish for. When a rural road gets paved, traffic volume and speed tend to increase, creating new safety issues.

One woman questioned the policy of the garbage disposal firm requiring her to place her recycling on the opposite side of the road. Pellegrini admitted this is part of the current contract and they're currently reviewing the deal, noting a new one will be out to tender next year. He did say that any "extra" requests from residents will add to the cost of the service.

Resident Nancy Hopkinson asked Councillor Boyd if he's reached out to the electorate, as communication was a priority in his election platform.

He said he's fine-tuning and updating his own website and keeping residents informed through Twitter and Facebook. Some suggested that Boyd use a newsletter, even sending one through the mail, for the older voters.

The lack of high-speed Internet services in parts of King was also raised.

Several carriers do offer service and there are fibre optic cables that residents may be able to access. Pellegrini sits on York's broadband committee and said strides are being made.

"We're working on it," he said.

Grandilli asked the mayor why council voted on a 2.97% tax increase, when millions in tax dollars have been generated by Nobleton subdivisions.

The mayor explained that this year, they actually put more than 3% into reserves, so the money collected from the increase will go to where it's needed.

"Reserves are key to King's sustainability," Pellegrini said. "It's the fair thing to do for the common good."