

Mayor's task force on keeping public informed about offenders

By Mark Pavilons

King council has asked staff to help create a mayor's task force charged with keeping the public informed on dangerous offenders living in the community.

The move came following a massive public turnout Sunday, at a community meeting organized by York Regional Police to inform residents about a high-risk offender living near Schomberg.

Councillor Bill Cober told council Monday night it has been a difficult few days in his ward. Fear and anxiety consumed many residents. He offered his praise for Mayor Steve Pellegrini who took the lead on the issue and responded to citizen concerns at the public meeting, which drew upwards of 600 residents. Cober pointed out it's easy to lead when times are good, but when people are angry, it becomes a challenge. The mayor worked hard on this. He also praised staff who helped pull it all together, as well as King's volunteer firefighters who kept an eye on things at the Trisan Centre.

This was a time, and issue, never before seen in King, Cober observed, adding they're all on a learning curve. A number of questions arose from the meeting, questions that need to be answered.

And that's where this new task force comes in. Mayor Pellegrini wants it to be 'agile and quick' in responding to citizen concerns. He hopes to have representation from council, senior staff and members of the public.

Issues that may be addressed include a safety audit on the facilities in King that house offenders, and this specific one near Schomberg. Cober suggested that planning staff provide information on zoning rules governing group homes and halfway houses.

Cober also wanted types of offenders clearly defined, including those who are deemed 'high risk' and 'dangerous.'

He also wants this task force to maintain ties with York Regional Police. Cover praised YRP for 'being there for the community in a time of need.'