

Application draws widespread opposition

By Mark Pavilons

An application to pave the way for a severance in King City drew widespread opposition during a public meeting Feb. 8.

The bid, for amendments to the Official Plan and zoning bylaw, was criticized for its precedent-setting nature. The proposal, if it proceeds, would ultimately lead to two homes on a half-acre subdivision property.

This drew renewed calls for a ban on severances in existing plans of subdivisions, by residents and King City's councillor Cleve Mortelliti.

While he accepts change is coming to King City, Mortelliti has gone on record opposing severances in "legacy subdivisions." He doesn't buy the intensification argument and says we have to protect and preserve existing communities.

It's unfortunate that applications such as this pit neighbour against neighbour.

"I don't know if we can prohibit severances ... I hope we can," he said.

The application by Mark and Liina Peacock centres on their property at 325 Warren Road. It measures .52 acres and currently there's a two-storey home, attached garage and inground pool on the property. The bid is to split the lot in two and each parcel would measure just over 1,000 square metres and have roughly 25 metres frontage.

King's bylaw dictates that lots must be a minimum of 1,400 square metres in area. This application does meet the minimums in terms of setbacks.

This property was created back in 1977, with another 52 lots along Warren Road. It's at the western edge of Spring Hill Gardens.

According to Stephen Kitchen, King's planning director, a minor variance application was submitted in 2010 to create an additional lot, but it was opposed by staff. Since this 2010 bid, only one other application for severance in King City has been considered.

Staff is awaiting for response from various commenting agencies on the proposal. Kitchen noted more than 70 letters were received in support of the bid, and another 31 in opposition.

Staff recommendations, along with input from residents garnered at the public meeting, will be presented back to council at a later date.

The King City plan, Kitchen explained, said new developments should be compatible with, and maintain the character of, the existing community. This bid meets all the requirements except minimum lot area.

Brad Rogers, of Groundswell Urban Planners, representing the Peacocks, said this application should be considered specific to 325 Warren Road and the modest dwelling proposed. If the amendments pass, a severance bid will follow. He said the current property has one of the largest frontages in the neighbourhood and the new home would be roughly 2,130 square feet.

Other lots in the vicinity range from 500 to 1,400 square metres in area. The newer subdivision to the south have lots less than 800 square metres.

He doesn't see this bid as setting any precedent, noting the Township reviews them on a case-by-case basis.

The frontage, and not the area, Rogers argued, has the most impact at ground level.

Several residents spoke in favour of the application.

A Warren Road homeowner said the plan would enhance the street and provide more tax revenue for the Township. Another neighbour said with the "monster homes" springing up in the area, a modest home at 2,100 square feet is "no contest."

A Berton Grove resident said there's currently a large void spot on the property and the plans would fill it up nicely.

A Warren Road woman, who spoke to friends and neighbours, said it's a great idea, adding the Peacocks are good neighbours and community members.

A Bennet Drive resident said this lot is one of the widest, so reducing the frontage would be in keeping with existing lots.

Changes are occurring all around them, according to an Elizabeth Grove resident.

A Banner Lane man said there seems to be two sets of standards "one for existing lots and another for small, new subdivision lots. Dana Anderson, who represented several area residents, led the opposition to the plan.

A planner herself, she said the application should be viewed on both physical and policy contexts.

It's an older, established neighbourhood with mature lots. All of these define the neighbourhood. Over the decades, only three severance have ever been approve in the area.

This change would set a precedent and she stressed the previous land division proposal was also refused.

It simply doesn't conform to the Official Plan and changing the policies for this lot is "not appropriate."

A Warren Road man said this plan would be out of scale and change the character of the subdivision. Others may jump on the bandwagon and pursue similar bids for financial gain if this passes.

A land use lawyer who lives on Patricia Drive, said this bid doesn't fall under provincial guidelines of intensification. This bid, if successful, will encourage further severances which will introduce a lot fabric that doesn't fit.

A resident environmental lawyer said a planning review looks solely at this lot, and not nearby subdivision lots. To approve this would be bad planning and is inconsistent with fundamental themes in King's planning documents.

A man representing an adjacent property owner said an Official Plan amendment is a significant thing, which suggests the OP is wrong and needs to be changed. The King City Community Plan, he charged, reinforces well established neighbourhoods. More than 2/3rds of properties in the area are larger than the subject lot, which would end up being the smallest two lots by far.

He urged council to base its decision on what's good for the neighbourhood as a whole. He went as far as saying there should be a moratorium on severances.

Greg Locke, of Concerned Citizens of King Township, said their mandate is to protect and enhance King's rural villages.

It's sad to see neighbours at odds over this, adding it could become a wedge that will open up other applications.

Ian Hilley, secretary for the Kingscross Ratepayers' Association, said they are opposed to severances within existing communities.

He urged council to refuse the bid and avoid a gold rush that will turn King into the Klondike.

Resident Bruce Craig said there are far-reaching implications and he suggested that perhaps an interim policy on severances is in order to stem the tide.

Leslie Whicher, co-chair of KRA, said conflict arises out of uncertainty. She warned against allowing this, and other severances, asking councillors to look at the broader objectives of the OP. She said how can the Township defend its new OP if it allows such severances?

King Mayor Steve Pellegrini lauded the residents for their respectful presentations in what could be a charged issue. King is full of passionate people, he observed.

Mortelliti said it's a privilege for him to sit in this chair and serve his constituents.