

Sign bylaw sent back for final tweaking

By Mark Pavilons

A request by a King City business led councillors to send its revamped sign bylaw back to staff for one final revision.

King council was ready to pass the new and improved sign bylaw Jan. 8, but deferred the matter after a local business asked for added signage for the King's Ridge Market.

The long-awaited bylaw was heralded by council, staff and the Chamber of Commerce, after almost two years of discussions. Council was poised to enact the bylaw, when local businessman Andy Nemes, who runs the Benjamin Moore outlet, made a request. He's also a board member of the King Chamber of Commerce.

Nemes noted the plaza boasts some 400 metres of frontage on King Road and the bylaw permits one sign every 96 metres. But there's a limit and as it stands, the bylaw would allow for two mobile signs on King Road and two on Dufferin. Nemes said as a business owner, he needs to promote his business a few times each year. These mobile signs are "very important to tenants in the plaza."

He asked for a minor change to the bylaw, allowing three signs along King Road.

Mayor Steve Pellegrini said he's hesitant to change the wording in the bylaw, and would prefer looking at this on a site-specific basis. There is some flexibility built into the bylaw, he noted.

Councillor David Boyd was also reluctant to amend the bylaw.

Staff noted the new bylaw does allow for increased marketing opportunities and they can always look at site-specific requests in the future.

Mayor Pellegrini added he's torn on this one because on one hand, the Township is an avid supporter of local business, and on the other he doesn't want to create an eyesore with mobile signs. The bylaw itself came about as a result of "sign pollution."

Councillor Mortelliti added that technology today allows for alternatives to mobile signs.

The motion was deferred to allow staff to look at accommodating the needs of King's Ridge and the tenants. When fully built, the complex will house roughly 30 businesses.

"Signs remain an important part of marketing a local business," commented Chamber president Tom Allen, at a previous delegation to council.

There are challenges in dealing with strip malls with numerous tenants. Staff did concede they would allow more signs per frontage and apply a break period for the same tenant.

"This new Sign Bylaw will provide for new signage opportunities," staff noted. "Further, this bylaw will ensure signage in the Township is enforceable and in alignment with provincial legislation ... The draft Sign Bylaw ... is a bylaw that fairly reflects revised permissions as identified through engagement with the Sign Working Group."

Since its implementation in 2013, concerns were raised by the business community and the King Chamber of Commerce. A Chamber survey and forum gathered input, and revealed most felt the bylaw was too restrictive regarding certain types of signage and methods of advertising.

Staff has been working closely with the Chamber and a working group was formed to find reasonable solutions. One of the main issues raised by the working group was that more common and emerging signage and marketing trends were being permitted in other communities.