

Ward 15 Newsletter – December 2004



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Where Do The Big Box Developments Stand At This Point? As most Ward 15 residents know, there are two proposals for big-box developments at the east corners of Highways 5 and 6. The south proposal, called the Waterdown Power Centre, is being spearheaded by Trinity Development Group and while they had their zoning locked in quite some time ago, they, in turn, appealed their own zoning. That effectively puts the application on hold for the time being.

The north side proposal, called the Flamborough Power Centre, recently came to Hamilton Council to have their subdivision agreement approved. For those not familiar with civic engineering, the subdivision agreement simply states where the roads and buildings will be placed within the development, should it be approved. It is not the City agreeing to allow the development. Both sides have to submit documented evidence which supports their application, a Peer Review is then commissioned by the City of Hamilton which reviews those findings and makes an independent recommendation which deals with issues such as increased pressure on local traffic, effects (both positive and negative) on existing Waterdown retailers, water use concerns and any number of effects that may have been missed by the applicants consultants.

As it stands now, local businesses have expressed that they do not want any new businesses at the Power Centres to be under 5,000-square-feet and our Planning staff is well-aware of this. Negotiations continue with both sides to ensure that this is the case. But the important thing to remember is that in the end, the City has the power to say 'yea' or 'nay' to these proposals and it's incumbent on the developers to listen to the wishes of the local community.

I'll keep you abreast of new developments on the two proposals as they come through City Hall.

Lowndes Quarry Application Hits City Hall: Literally months after it was supposed to be handed in, the City has finally received the Lowndes Holding Inc. quarry application. In my 10-plus years as a municipal politician, I have never seen a development application galvanize a community the way this quarry application has.

For those who may have missed the story in the local newspaper, I was approached by the owner of Lowndes Holding Inc., David Lowndes, back in May. He indicated to me his intention of creating a 500-acre quarry at the corner of 11th Concession Road East and Milborough Line. For several months, area residents had been asking me who was buying up the land at that corner and what they intended to use it for. Well, finally, we knew. I called some key area residents to let them know and the word spread like wildfire. By the beginning of June, we held a meeting in Carlisle Community Arena with Mr. Lowndes in attendance to answer questions. By and large, the residents did not like the answers they were given and frankly, I agreed. The area is populated by country homes – all of whom would be negatively impacted by increased truck traffic (as many as 1,000 trucks every day!), water table concerns, especially given the environmentally sensitive area of the application, noise concerns from the crushers and any other number of headaches that a quarry would bring to local residents.

It took no time at all for the local residents to mobilize against the proposal. Resident meetings were held at Herb Lawson's Park on the 11th Concession Road East and they quickly created an anti-quarry group called FORCE (Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment.) The group is being headed up by area resident Graham Flint, who can be contacted at 905-659-5417 or e-mailed at: grahamflint@stopthequarry.ca The group has also created a thorough and eye-catching website: www.StopTheQuarry.ca So far, they have raised over \$50,000 for the cause, to give you an indication of how seriously they are taking this battle. As well, a quick drive north of Carlisle will see numerous "No Quarry" signs scattered on front lawns throughout the area. FORCE is making sure its voice is heard and its message is seen.

As well, since Milton/Campbellville is right across the street from the proposed quarry, Robert Beyette, the president of the Milton Rural Residents Association (MRRA) is also on board, joining the cause with FORCE and putting pressure on Halton politicians to see what they can do to stop the proposal.

Before long, even the Balaclava School Council has drafted a resolution, asking that the quarry proposal be turned down at every level of government, citing the increased traffic and their resultant concerns for their students' safety.

From our end, in September, Hamilton City Council passed a report that created a framework on how we would deal with any quarry proposals that came before the city, including their effects on wetlands, the environment and the area residents. We were in a position that we could not gear it to Lowndes' application directly since his application has not been received. So basic rules were created by the development staff to ensure a proper process be put into place when the city receives a quarry application anywhere within its boundaries.

Currently, the city has hired Stephen Rowe, an aggregate planning advisor to examine the application. Our planning staff doesn't deal with many quarry applications and thus, wanted to bring in a specialist to make sure that every

aspect of the application is completely understood by our planners. In terms of physical size, it is reported that Lowndes quarry would be among the top-eight in Canada and in the top-five across the country for limestone extraction. This is a huge development for a quiet, rural setting.

Allowing this application would involve an amendment to the Flamborough Official Plan. ***However, when the application finally comes before council, I feel confident that I have the votes in place to stop this application cold – at least at the city level.*** However, this is where the real battle will begin.

The Provincial Ministry of Natural Resources, as well as the Ministry of Transportation, has indicated to municipalities across Ontario that there is an aggregate shortage and they can, in fact, overturn or supercede any municipal decision. It will be up to us to convince the Ministry that this is **not** the proper place to allow a quarry, as well as seek protection for the significant wetlands and water table from the Ministry of the Environment. In the end, we anticipate it will be one provincial ministry versus another when the application gets pushed to the provincial level.

But this will not be a short battle – lawyers familiar with fighting quarries in other Ontario municipalities have told FORCE that this could be a five year fight. I have no doubt that the group is up for that.

In the meanwhile, the Lowndes' application, which fills a four-inch thick binder, is being poured through by city staff to ensure it is complete. Beyond that, we have new concerns that are more immediate. The inflated prices that the proponent paid to local residents for their properties could greatly affect the Current Value Assessments (CVAs) of those residents still there. After all, the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) uses sale prices to gauge the next level of CVA increases. If the figures we have are accurate, these properties sold for more than double their listed 2004 CVA and in one case, far more than that. So I will be approaching MPAC with the sales figures, as well as the 2004 CVAs, to explain that the sale prices were greatly inflated by a buyer wishing to build a quarry. Hopefully, we can keep the CVAs on the northern Concession Roads reasonable, despite the inflated sales prices.

Obviously, I will keep you up-to-date on this application as it works its way through City Hall. As well, if you would like to support FORCE, please feel free to contact Graham Flint at the number provided.

Waterdown/Aldershot Master Transportation Plan Moves Forward: Many of you might remember the Waterdown/Aldershot Master Transportation Plan which dealt with the Waterdown Bypass from back in the days when we were still Flamborough. The creation of the Hamilton supercity put the whole bypass plan on hold for a few years but now it has resurfaced. So far, there have been two public meetings – one in Burlington; the other at the Waterdown YMCA – as well as an additional Stakeholders Meeting, again in Burlington, recently.

The upshot is this: we are required to create an east-west transportation corridor to accommodate the future growth of Waterdown. Once the Province passed Official Plan Amendment (OPA) 28 in June 2002, it mandated that the transportation corridor be revisited by Hamilton staff. OPA28 opens the doors for 6,500 new residential units (or upwards of 15,000 new residents) in Waterdown – all of which will be built within the next 10 years, if not, sooner – and we are in the position where we have to make sure our roads can handle the additional traffic. Nothing will be built overnight – environmental assessments have to be done, potential routes have to be explored and existing roads have to be studied. Most Flamborough residents, back in 1999-2000, preferred the East-West 5 Modified Route, which came north from Aldershot in the Evans Road area, stretched over the top of the existing houses in Waterdown (towards the south end of the Joe Sams Park area), crossing Highway 6 and rejoining Highway 5 just before the Rock Chapel Road area. However, there were some who didn't like that option, as well. Clearly, the least popular route was the widening of Parkside Drive and I have no doubt those very vocal views, which we heard loud and clear back then, have not changed one bit.

But please remember this – we are legally mandated by the future population growth in Waterdown to create this transportation corridor. No matter which route is chosen, some residents will be unhappy. But we'll keep going until we find the one that makes the most sense in the end. And city staff knows the public consultation is the key in this regard.

And Finally Some Good News: After three consecutive CVA changes for Flamborough residents – two of which were huge – MPAC has announced that there will be no new CVAs this year. So your present CVA will stand until next November. In 2001, the average CVA hike in Flamborough was 16.6 per cent, followed by an average increase for our residents of 12.2 per cent in 2002. Finally, last year, things leveled out a little with the average hike in Flamborough being 8.7 per cent, just below the city average. So your present CVA will stand for another year.

Flamborough Town Hall Constituent Days: I am still holding Constituent Days at Flamborough Town Hall every second Thursday of the month from 1 to 4 p.m. However, don't feel that you have to wait until those days, especially if you have an urgent concern. Meetings can be scheduled with me at Flamborough Town Hall throughout the month by simply phoning the office and scheduling one.

If you want to contact me through the week regarding other constituency concerns, I am available at 905-546-2713. I am also available through my City Hall e-mail address which is: mmccarth@hamilton.ca My assistant, Don, is also available at 905-546-3944 or at: dredmond@hamilton.ca. Best wishes and see you in 2005...

Sincerely, *Margaret McCarthy*