

County Delegation suggests DWPI survey

What is the cost of regret? ? Karen Wallace

A motion, supported unanimously at County Council January 8th, following a delegation by Melancthon native Karren Wallace, requested County staff make arrangements to obtain a survey to determine the total length of the Dufferin Wind Power Inc. 230 kV transmission line running along the County owned rail corridor from Melancthon to near Orangeville. The Ontario Energy Board (OEB) approved Dufferin Wind's plan to construct the 230 Kv line from its 49-turbine wind farm in Melancthon in 2013. Wallace says that under the Electricity Act, if the transmission lines in this project exceed 50 km then it is in contravention of the Act and this would trigger an Environmental Assessment. The motion to survey was moved by Melancthon Mayor Darren White and seconded by Shelburne Mayor Ken Bennington.

Citizens in Melancthon Township have continued to voice their concern about the line length, among many other issues which include health risks from alleged stray voltage and the question of source water contamination from deep transmission pole bore holes acting as possible conduits into Melancthon bedrock.

As Wallace, Dufferin-Caledon's Green Party candidate, started her presentation, she told Council that following delegations by the Headwaters Hospital for funding as well as Food and Water First was a perfect fit.? She reminded them that her delegation was not about wind power, but about the health of citizens just like the previous presenters. Wallace's delegation requested: an environmental hearing on the basis that DWPI's mitigation plan was not a minor amendment to the Renewable Energy Approval (REA) and under the Electricity Act, the transmission lines in this project must not exceed 50 km; a peer review of the mitigation plan at DWPI's expense.

Wallace has pressed DWPI for the release of their mitigation plans for the pole bore holes regarding the citizen's concerns for months, including at an environmental tribunal in December. Last week plans for sealing the bore holes appeared on the DWPI website based on information provided to Dillon (engineering firm) from Dufferin Wind Power.? The documents can be seen @ www.dufferinwindpower.ca/ReportsApplications.aspx.

But Darren White, the newly elected Mayor of Melancthon who witnessed citizen push back stop the proposal for a Mega Quarry in his township said he was disappointed that DWPI and the MOECC spent so much time keeping this lack of information from the public.? He said it was discouraging that the MOECC didn't require more science based evidence for this part of the project, I am dismayed that you need more documentation and study to build a storage shed than you do to sink more than 300 poles into an aquifer and I am disturbed that people don't take the health of our water more seriously given the mega quarry battle.?

Mayor Darren White also had a motion on the table to measure the levels of Electro Magnetic Force (EMF) coming from the DWPI lines. He told the Free Press:

My motion on EMF is all about due diligence. It's not an attack on Dufferin Wind Power. As local politicians we have a duty to ensure that the rail corridor is safe for recreational uses by our citizens. A letter from DWPI lawyers to the County suggesting I am targeting them and being unfair by only measuring the rail line transmission line is ridiculous. We don't have recreational trails under other high voltage lines. If DWPI is sure this is safe then they should have no problem with an independent third party measuring it.?

White's motion to measure EMF levels on the line moved forward at Council last Thursday, but was amended slightly. The motion now directs staff to investigate pricing, available consultants and process for the purpose of measuring and recording levels of EMF at multiple locations along the DWPI transmission line.? Mayor White says, Once that is done we will go to a request for proposal (RFP.) Shelburne's Mayor Ken Bennington, who seconded the motion, had this to say:

These surveys and measurements are not an attack against DWP. The simple truth is that there is now a power line running through our community that wasn't there a year ago. Our community has raised concerns regarding the length of the power line and EMF levels. Although DWP indicates that EMF levels are within the safe measurements, I would like an independent review to confirm that statement. I attended an impromptu meeting directly underneath the power lines just before Christmas, where light bulbs and power testers were lighting up in our hands. DWP says this is a well known phenomenon, maybe it is, maybe it isn't...an independent review will answer that question.?

On the matter of public health and surveying DWPI's line, Karren Wallace asked Council, even if it costs \$50,000 what is that on County's \$34 million dollar budget compared to the cost of regret?? Wallace later stated that she was absolutely grateful to County Council for recognizing there may be an issue with the transmission lines and for taking such unanimous and decisive action.?

By Marni Walsh