

Amaranth Coun. Mark Tijssen storms out of meeting, announces resignation

Written By PAULA BROWN

Problems within Amaranth Council continued last week, with Coun. Mark Tijssen suddenly announcing he was resigning during the township's most recent meeting last Wednesday (Sept. 2).

With Amaranth Council prepared to enter closed sessions to discuss a workplace harassment report and the possible consequences regarding Amaranth Mayor Bob Currie, Coun. Tijssen walked out of the meeting, and announced his resignation from council.

"I didn't know what was happening because we had entered a closed meeting and Coun. Tijssen just got up, gathered his papers and left. He didn't say anything," said Deputy Mayor Chris Gerrits in a recent interview with the Free Press. "Council wasn't aware of anything or the reason until the Mayor came back and said that Coun. Tijssen had called him and said that he was resigning."

In mid-May a workplace harassment complaint was received by the Ministry of Labour, who then advised the township to bring in a third party investigator to explore the complaint that was brought forward.

"The situation I was aware of where certain members of staff had had negative interactions with some members of council," said Gerrits, who initiated the complaint to the Ministry. "My official complaint was against two members of council and their interactions in the past couple of year with members of staff."

The third party investigator provided recommendations to Amaranth CAO Nicole Martin, disclosing that one of the recommendations was to revoke the powers of Mayor Bob Currie and to restrict him from attending the township offices.

Deputy Mayor Gerrits and Coun. Gail Little voted in favour of restricting the powers of the mayor, while Coun. Heather Foster and Tijssen both voted in opposition leading to the request being defeated in the 2-2 vote.

"I voted in favor of restricting the ability of the mayor because I wanted to see some control put in place," said Gerrits, who alleged numerous phone calls and attendance to the township offices was impeding the ability of staff's ability to work.

Internal problems within Amaranth Council have become increasingly apparent.

"We don't agree on everything, we probably shouldn't, there's always a debate and sometimes it gets heated," said Gerrits. "I think the public is aware and sometimes certain members cross the line, in my opinion."

Despite Tijssens' sudden announcement of resignation last Wednesday, Gerrits said that over the last two years Tijssen had mentioned various times that he had considered resigning. The timing of his resignation said Gerrits is what was surprising.

Mark Tijssen has not responded to several requests for an interview. To follow through with his resignation, he must now submit official documentation outlining his intentions to CAO Martin. As of press time, that written resignation has not been received.