

Shelburne council wants plans before Dufferin Wind Power proceeds

Tension filled the Shelburne Council chambers Monday night when Town staff and councillors faced a large delegation of Dufferin Wind Power (DWP) representatives.

The wind turbine company began constructing a 230-kilovolt underground transmission line on the County-owned former CP Rail rail corridor last week. Council, concerned about a letter of review from their municipal engineer, wanted to see the DWP plans, which they had expected to receive prior to construction commencing.

The Town engaged S.Burnett & Associates (SBA) as municipal engineer to review and inspect the DWP project as it relates to the transmission line within Shelburne. SBA was informed that construction would start as soon as June 9 at the 4th Line of Melancthon. On June 10, SBA was instructed to attend the site and commence full-time inspection of the construction activities. In a letter to town CAO John Telfer, SBA reviewed "the limited information provided to date, commitments from the Renewable Energy Approval (REA) and approval documents and general construction information." The following is a shortened version of SBA's summary of items of concern they had identified in the field to the contractor:

"No official construction drawings are on site. The sub-contractor is utilizing a preliminary drawing set and schematics completed as of last Friday, June 13, which included the drilling of the HDPE carrier pipes under the 4th Line of Melancthon.

"Construction activities, including the widening of the rail corridor and the turnaround area located on the edge of a wetland area, were completed with no plans at all.

There are several areas where silt fencing installed has been compromised and not repaired.

"There are also areas of silt fencing that have not been installed properly

"Additional silt fence and proper environmental measures should be installed through the wetland. This has been identified by the environmental monitors, but ultimately a proper environmental erosion and sediment control plan and environment risk management plan must be prepared before construction activities continue.

"Additional Traffic Control and a Traffic Management plan is required as per the Ontario Health & Safety Act & Regulations Green Book, including flagmen at both entrances to the job site at Hwy 89 and the 4th line of Melancthon for safe vehicle management.

"A sturdy fence at least 1.8 m in height must be installed along the right-of-way at the back of the school and playground property.

Council restated that the agreement with DWP was they would receive working plans on how the drilling would proceed before construction started. It was obvious from their reaction to the report that they were deeply concerned about the safety of citizens, drinking water, and underground infrastructure. Director of Public Works Scott Wheeldon was emphatic about the danger to ground water as the DWP construction crew is drilling upstream of Town Well #3, saying, "I've never seen anything like this in 20 years of working in big construction projects."

Connie Roberts, from DWP Corporate Communications, released a statement to Tuesday afternoon which included the following: "Dufferin Wind Power has been in consultation with Town of Shelburne representatives, including the CAO, Deputy Mayor, Clerk, Treasurer, Director of Public Works and its engineering consultants earlier this year and then again with the Director of Public Works this spring prior to the start of construction activities. Prior to installation activities, Dufferin Wind also completed the necessary "locates" and surveys of existing infrastructure along the transmission line route, including the Shelburne area, to ensure the safe construction of the project. This included consulting with the Town of Shelburne's Director of Public Works in regards to areas of concern and their preferred construction methods for these areas.

?Unfortunately, Dufferin Wind Power had respectfully requested information from the Town of Shelburne regarding their underground utilities on several occasions but was only able to gain access to this information after considerable delay. While this caused a delay in finalizing the final engineering drawings, it did not affect the design, consultations, or planned construction methodologies that had been previously discussed with the Town of Shelburne.?

After a lengthy in camera session with consultants on Monday night, Deputy Mayor Ken Bennington told DWP representatives that Council would do whatever was necessary to protect the assets, people, and town, including calling the Ontario Energy Board, the Ministry of Energy, the NVCA and even the Town Police to stop the project until DWP comes to the table and gives the Town assurances. ?Because,? he said looking at the DWP representatives, ?I don't think you care.?

By Marni Walsh