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Council refuses application for adult lifestyle community in King City

By Angela Gismondi

King council has rejected a proposal to build an adult lifestyle community in rural King City.
In a unanimous vote held at a meeting Monday, council opposed the official plan amendment application submitted by Maryann and Vito Pacifico. They requested that the Ontario Municipal Board do the same for various reasons, including that the plan does not conform to the Township's municipal and provincial plans and policies. They also instructed the Township solicitor and staff to prepare for and attend the OMB?hearing in support of council's position.
The applicant is proposing to build a 120-unit adult lifestyle condominium community on Mill Road and Elmpine Trail in King City. The lands are comprised of about 86 acres on the west side of Mill Road south of King Road and abutting the King-Vaughan boundary. The proposal includes an aging in place community with an independent living environment for seniors as well as assisted living facilitates which would include an array of services and amenities.
In May 2012, the Pacificos made an application to the Township to amend the official plan and the Hamlet Secondary plan. The purpose of the proposed amendment is to designate certain lands along Elmpine Trail as a hamlet and then to expand the boundary of the proposed Hamlet to include the Pacifico lands, thus permitting the development on the lands and facilitating an adult lifestyle condominium community consisting of about 120 independent living units (freehold townhomes) organized in clusters, an assisted living building, commercial uses, and a community centre.
The applicants filed an appeal to the OMB?on the basis that the Region failed to make a decision on OPA 58. OPA 58 was the Township's official plan update for the rural areas of King, adopted in 1997, but never approved by the Region. The applicants requested that OPA 58 be modified and approved to designate the entire Elmpine Trail lands be designated as a hamlet in order to allow for the development of the proposed adult lifestyle condominium community on the Pacifico lands.
According to the staff report, neither the Elmpine Trail Lands nor the Pacifico Lands were ever identified by the township for consideration as a settlement area. Furthermore, there was no intent at any time during the development of OPA 58, which took place prior to 2001, to recognize the area in the vicinity of Elmpine Trail as a hamlet. Planning staff pointed out that it is not appropriate to utilize OPA 58, a long dormant, outdated and unapproved official plan document, to facilitate the application submitted by the applicant so many years after its adoption. For this reason, council voted in favour of repealing OPA 58 at this past Monday's meeting.
Planning staff identified significant concerns with the application relating to conformity to provincial, regional and local policy including the identification of a small group of existing residential dwellings as a new settlement area, the expansion of that new proposed settlement area to include the Pacifico Lands and the proposed development on those lands and the scale of such development being much more appropriately located within a designated town/village settlement area.
Neighbouring landowners also came to the meeting to voice their concerns.
?I just want you to appreciate that this is not a NIMBY (not in my backyard) issue, this is an area which needs to be respected as an environmentally sensitive area,? said local resident Mary Bromley.
She also questioned why the applicant has not submitted an updated concept plan.
?I don't know how anyone can make a decision on this property without seeing an updated concept plan,? she concluded.
Resident Ed Bartam pointed out that a petition opposing the development was signed by all the residents in the area. He added a development of this magnitude would require a complete transformation of the area.
?Mill Road will have to be totally rebuilt and all the hills removed,? he said. ?The only way you would be able to have a residence there is if you destroy the picturesque Mill Road that twists and turns. It will totally destroy this area of the East Humber valley.?
The lawyer representing the applicant also came forward at the meeting. He said his clients believe their application is complete and constitutes good planning.
?They believe in this property and will take any action necessary, before the OMB and otherwise, to defend their application,? he said, adding he was there to listen to the concerns of the residents.
He requested that instead of denying the application, council defer it to give the applicant time to amend the application.
Councillor Debbie Schaefer made a motion to move staff's recommendations to refuse the development application and to instruct staff to represent the position of council at the OMB. She also requested a recorded vote. The motion carried unanimously.