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Dufferin County Council looks at ways to reduce service delivery costs, considers amalgamation

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Dufferin County Council is opening up discussions and exploring ways to save money regarding service delivery.

Dufferin County Council held a special meeting on Jan. 25 to discuss the roles of local and upper-tier levels of government, identify areas of duplication and propose ways to streamline service delivery.

The meeting was organized in response to a motion brought forward by Grand Valley Deputy Mayor Philip Rentsch during the November County Council meeting.

?It seems to me that there is a lot of opportunity to simplify how we do things, and I think for me, the first step is to look at the things that are done at both tiers and go, ?does this make sense?'? said Coun. Philip Rentsch, regarding his decision to bring the motion to Council. ?I think there's good evidence over the last four years that there is a lot of money that we're spending that isn't giving us a return, and our job, at least I think my job, is to get the best bang for the buck for our ratepayers.?

?Things are doing good, but I think if there's a chance that we could do it just a little better, then we owe it to the taxpayers,? said Coun. Steve Solomon, who seconded the initial motion.

During the meeting, the majority of Dufferin County Councillors agreed with the need to reevaluate service delivery and determine where duplications are occurring at the upper and lower tiers of government.

?We inherited these structures, and I think from time to time it makes sense to do an evaluation to see if it's still meeting the needs of Council, of staff, and of the ratepayers,? said Coun. James McLean, Deputy Mayor of Melancthon.

One specific topic indicated as an area of discussion for the reevaluation of governance was the possibility of amalgamating into a single-tier government. The topic brought mixed perspectives from representatives of various municipalities.

?I think we have to be open to the idea of amalgamation and have the conversation, put it on the table and see if it's an idea that could work, and if it's not let's take it off the table and see how else we can do a better job for our residents,? said Coun. Lisa Post, Mayor of Orangeville.

Meanwhile, other County councillors had different viewpoints.

?Bigger is not better; bigger does not mean cheaper, and it does not mean more efficient. I think that clearly puts me in the grouping of those who would oppose a ?City of Dufferin'; I was against it years ago, I'm against it now. However, there are areas of duplication that I think we need to wrestle with and those are areas where we can achieve some efficiency and potential cost savings,? said Coun. John Creelman, Mayor of Mono.

Dufferin County Council passed a motion to have Warden Darren White work with senior County staff members to bring back a framework for discussions around governance and service delivery by the next County Council meeting, which will be held on Feb. 8.