

Local engineer reviews county OP

Garry Hunter has strong roots in the beautiful farm communities of Mulmur and Melancthon townships where his grandparents and parents farmed, and where he was raised. He attended the two room public school and high school at Honeywood, he played hockey at the Honeywood arena, and as a university student helped to construct the present arena when the old one burned. He helped his parents on their farm in Melancthon, and his Mom, Marion Hunter was the clerk of Melancthon for 25 years, until she retired at the age of 78. Although his parent's farm has been sold, the family still owns a vacant lot in Melancthon.

Garry's engineering firm, Hunter and Associates, retained by the North Dufferin Agricultural and Community Taskforce (NDACT,) developed extensive mapping and documentation for the successful battle against the Highland Companies' application for open pit mining on prime farmland in Melancthon. Currently, he has an outstanding Freedom of Information Appeal with the Township of Melancthon to obtain the Township Mega Quarry peer reviews. These documents are important in the continued fight for change in the Aggregate Resources Act and protect the future of source water and prime farmland in the County. Hunter was also recently involved in Arbitration on behalf of a disgruntled Melancthon wind farm participant. In short, Garry is investing his time to protect a place that is dear to him.

In that vain, Garry has made public his review of the new County Official Plan Draft, circulating it widely, including to County Council and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. He has made comments together with a number of schedules including bedrock resources, and land capabilities for agriculture and wind turbine locations for consideration. Hunter's initial observation is that the County Official Plan generally reflects the policies for agriculture, aggregate and other policies as mandated by the Province.

He notes that the "greatest surprise to those involved with Mega Quarry issues in Melancthon is the reduction of the Bedrock Mineral Aggregate Resource Area west of Honeywood to less than 5000 acres in the County OP. The aggregate designation is based on the 2014 Ontario Geological Survey, which notes it as "an important and significant revision" which significantly reduces the accessible high quality construction aggregate resource sought after by the aggregate industry. "These revisions suggest that the portion of the former mega Quarry application west of County Road 124 was frivolous, at least in terms of producing high specification concrete aggregate," noted Hunter, "and that the Lower Tier Approved and Draft Official Plans should be updated to reflect this revision."

Hunter has advocated for years to have Melancthon Township stipulate areas of Specialty Crop Land in the Township Official Plan. Hunter notes that the Draft County OP "articulates Provincial Policy for Agriculture" and "does not recognize Dufferin County Specialty Crops," but rather "lumps agriculture into one 250,000 acre 'Prime Agricultural Area' (Capability Classes 1, 2 and 3) to be protected for agricultural uses unless appropriate justification is provided for alternative uses." In his review, Hunter outlines justification for alternative uses which compares the Honeywood silt loam soils to the Specialty Crop lands of Niagara, Holland Marsh and Thornbury. The Province's lack of definition for Specialty Crops has been a road block in this designation being applied in Melancthon Township, but Hunter states that clearly, "the Provincial Policy Statements since 1996 have included language that Specialty Crop Areas may be designated using guidelines developed by the province."

The County has recently rescinded its Tree Cutting By-law, which also applied to the Lower Tier

Municipalities, "therefore," Hunter notes, "woodland protection is dependent on the County OP as the only instrument for protection from extensive tree clearing." The former County tree cutting by-law protected the proposed Mega Quarry woodlots from clear cutting by the Highland Companies. Hunter recommends that the "Forestry Act definition of Woodlands apply to non plantation native origin forest areas until such time as the proposed Natural Heritage Plan effort may be completed."

Hunter also recommends, among several items, a Schedule and Policies be added to the Draft OPA to recognize the wind farm participant lands, wind turbine locations and receptor setbacks. "These green energy facilities exist and impact land use planning," says Hunter. "For example, the Draft OP designated aggregate resources are effectively sterilized, for up to one half century or longer, if located where wind farm participant lease areas have been permitted. Ignoring these significant landscape features is not

good planning.? Hunter said, he had ?no idea why the Green Energy Act is ignored in the Draft OP; the land use limiting turbines and noise contours are certainly there.?

Residents are encouraged to attend the Statutory Public Meeting for the County Official Plan held on Wednesday, August 13, 2014 at the County of Dufferin Council Chambers, 51 Zina Street (2nd Floor), Orangeville, at 7:00 p.m. A revised version of the Official Plan will be available on-line and at the County office by the 24th of July. County Planners will continue to receive comments from the public up until the adoption of the plan scheduled for August 21st. Questions and comments may be directed to Tracey Atkinson, Project Manager Dufferin County Official Plan Phone: 519 941-2816 ext. 2508 or by e-mail: tatkinson@dufferincounty.ca

By Marni Walsh