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Sustainability in King much more than staying ?green?

By Mark Pavilons

Sustainability has many definitions, but in King Township, it's a never-ending pursuit of balance.

That was the message delivered by Mayor Steve Pellegrini, before a full house at the annual general meeting of the Concerned Citizens of King Township Sunday at the Trisan Centre.

The innovative, grassroots Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ISCP) has marked its first anniversary and the mayor provided some updates and insights into the plan's progress.

The buzz word ?sustainability??is often loosely defined as meeting the needs of the current generation without compromising future generations. The mayor says it's about balance, and creating harmony among four main ?pillars? in our ICSP ? the environment, economy, socio-culture issues and municipal finances.

Until recent political will and community involvement came together, King didn't have a current strategic plan or any economic/business strategies. After in-depth community involvement, the ICSP?now serves as King's strategic plan, setting the stage for the future.

The ICSP?contains some 19 major themes, values and more than a dozen short-term priorities, many of which have already been attained.

All staff reports that come before King council now contain references and/or direct links to the ICSP. The term ?integrated??is not just a catch phrase ? the ICSP?weaves its way through all aspects of local government and life in King Township.

Following the success of the ICSP, the Township is currently preparing its first-ever economic development strategy, along with a new recreation master plan.

Pellegrini noted there's a will to strengthen planning bylaws in King, particularly given the rapid growth experienced by King City and Nobleton.

He offered a current example to demonstrate how the principles of the ICSP?filter to local business development. The LCBO?is hoping to construct a new store at the Nobleton plaza occupied by No Frills. Their design has gone through several modifications, but a current stumbling block is the location of the loading docks, which face Highway 27. Council has stressed the need for aesthetics and maintaining the character of the village and hopes are a suitable compromise can be reached. Pellegrini noted this is a prime example of ?balance? ? weighing the local economy, social aspects and design elements to best benefit the community.

Since the ICSP?was implemented, staff, councillors and the public are on the sustainability bandwagon, encouraging resident engagement to ultimately enrich our local culture.

The community can get involved in many ways, and even small contributions make a big difference, Pellegrini said.

The Township is also working on updating the local village plans.

King is also a big agricultural community, and Councillor Avia Eek's presence on council has given farmers a voice.

The mayor also noted sustainability means thinking outside the box and finding different ways to achieve common goals. One way is to create partnerships and the Township has done so with local private schools Villanova and Country Day School, as well as Seneca College, in hopes of sharing sports facilities and art centres.

During question period, one resident praised the current council for its ?thoughtfulness??in taking the time to full consider the ramifications of its decisions.

Another resident wondered about affordable housing and housing mixes in King. The reality is King's land values are so astronomical it presents a dilemma and limits opportunities for affordable housing.

However, council and the community is looking at what to do with the old Schomberg arena and here is an opportunity to explore such potential. Submissions on ideas for the arena are being accepted by the Township until April 25.

The Township is also eyeing the former Holy Name school building and property on King Road, just west of King City.

King's staff and council understand development pressures and they try to be reasonable with anyone submitting an application. Sometimes, the Township is forced to go to the Ontario Municipal Board, which rules on planning applications. The mayor did note there is a reserve fund for the planning department to attend OMB?hearings.

Every aspect of living in this ?idyllic coummunity of communities??is touched and bolstered by the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan. And every resident is part of the plan.