

Council shuns activists for EFW

Clarington council appointed four members of the public to sit on the Energy from Waste — Waste Management Advisory Committee (EFW-WMAC), but Councillor Joe Neal says the process of making appointments needs work.

Fourteen individuals responded to the advertisements seeking applications to fill four positions on the EFW-WMAC. The mandate of this Committee is to act in an advisory role to the Durham Region Works Committee on issues related with waste management and the performance and monitoring of the EFW facility, including the construction and operational phase of the facility.

Neal said the only conclusion he could draw from the way the appointment process was carried out by council members last week was that councillors had discussed among themselves prior to the meeting who the appointees would be. "The only conclusion I could draw: there was considerable discussion prior to the meeting," he stated.

"There was consensus among certain councillors to who the four [appointees] would be," Neal said, "It is an amazing coincidence that those four were at the top of everybody's list."

At last Monday's General Purpose & Administration Committee Meeting, Councillor Ron Hooper introduced a motion to appoint the four applicants he had selected to the EFW-WMAC. That motion was seconded by Councillor Mary Novak, and despite efforts by Neal to alter the list of appointees, Hooper's list was approved.

Allegations that some sort of vote fixing took place, is a serious allegation," Mayor Foster told Neal. "If discussions and conversations were had, that would be contrary to council rules," Foster stated. "I was not part of a consensus in that decision making process,"

None of the appointees were individuals who had been involved in the movement to stop the incinerator from being built in Courtice.

There were three citizens on the list of applicants who Traill said, "Put countless hours of work researching this project every step of the way." That none of these three names were put forward, is "very concerning," she said.

"What was the selection criteria used to choose the appointees to the committee?" Louis Bertrand asked councillors at Monday night's council meeting. "Transparency in decision making is essential to upholding the integrity of the committee and of its members," he stated.

Linda Gasser, also a longtime opponent to incineration, appeared before Council Monday night, and asked councillors to re-think the appointments they made to the EFW-WMAC committee. Appointments were made at last week's Committee meeting and were to receive final approval at Monday night's council meeting.

Clarington and Durham residents deserve having the best qualified individuals appointed to this committee, Gasser told councillors.

"Most Durham and Clarington politicians know, as do many citizens including many of the applicants, that there is NO ONE in Durham Region who understands the issues around incinerator emissions, health risk assessment, ambient air and air quality studies and proposed monitoring plans, better than Wendy Bracken — full stop," Gasser stated.

Bracken's application to the committee was not supported by a majority of council members.

Applicants were asked to provide a detailed resume with covering letter, outlining their interests and qualifications. Additional information on why applications should be selected, detailing knowledge of the EFW facility and the Environmental Assessment process would be considered, according to the advertisement seeking applicants to the Committee.

The four applicants selected by councillors, "defy logic and the facts," Gasser told councillors. "What weighting was put on the individual criteria to arrive at the conclusion that on balance, the four applicants selected were the best for the job?" she asked.

The selection process as it stands relies on who is first to speak to put names forward, according to Neal. "That is not the most democratic way," he stated. Neal put forward a motion that council not appoint the four individuals selected last Monday, and instead that new appointments be made according to the process approved by Council in 2007 for making appointments to municipal boards and committees. This would mean that any councillor could suggest names from the approved list of applicants, the suggested names would be voted on individually, and the four names with the most votes would be selected.

According to Councillor Mary Novak, the four names selected last week were democratically chosen, and said she would support the motion as it stands. "I read the resumes very carefully and came to my own conclusion."

Clarington's appointees to the EFW-WMAC are: Kathy Coupland, Michelle Speelman Viney, Marven Whidden and Sophia Wouters. The unsuccessful applicants were: Tracy Ali, Suzanne Marie Barnes, John Bellman, Louis Bertrand, Wendy Bracken, John Cartwright, Geoff James, Catherine McKeever, Kerry Meydam and Terrance Rigby.

In a recorded vote, all councillors except Traill and Neal supported Clarington's appointments to the EFWMAC.