

Council changes the way they conduct meetings

December 5, 2007

Clarington councillors have adopted several changes to the way they will conduct future meetings. The Procedural By-law changes were recommended by staff, to streamline the flow of meetings, to clarify the roles of council and to ensure compliance with the Municipal Act.

A number of new items have been added to the By-law, including one dealing with adjournment of meetings. The proposed new bylaw, requires meetings be adjourned at 11:00 p.m. While this clause is new to Clarington's Procedural By-law, according to Municipal Clerk, Ms. Patti Barrie, many other municipalities have this provision in their by-laws.

Clarington council meetings, especially during this term of office, have been known to go past midnight. Lengthy presentations and public meeting on the energy from waste issue this term, have resulted in longer meetings. If a meeting is still in session at 11 p.m., it will be adjourned and reconvened on another day and at a time, as directed by resolution. Due scheduled meetings at the Region of Durham on

Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, Friday morning would be the most likely choice for rescheduled meetings, according to Barrie.

The new By-law proposes limiting the time for delegations to address Council to five minutes rather than the current 10-allowed. Five minutes is sufficient time for delegations to get their thoughts across, Barrie said at Monday's Committee Meeting. She suggested that additional thoughts could be submitted in writing.

Delegations at a Public Meeting will still have 10 minutes to make their feelings known. The longer time is recommended as individuals attending a public meeting have not had an opportunity prior to the meeting to see or hear in detail, the development in question.

Under the proposed new by-law, delegations would be restricted to speaking to matters that are included on the agenda. While General Purpose and Committee (GP&A) meeting reports are included on the following Monday's council agenda, delegates who spoke to an issue at the GP&A, they are not permitted to speak on the same matter at the council meeting.

Rules of conduct for delegations and presenters has been addressed in the proposed new by-law. Specifically it does not allow individuals making representation to council to speak disrespectfully of any person, use offensive words, disobey the decision of the Chair, enter into debate with Members of Council or -give any of their unused time to another delegation or presenter.

The audience also have rules by which they must conduct themselves. These include not addressing Council without permission, not interrupting a speaker, not clapping, speaking out, or behaving in a disorderly manner. At the suggestion of Councillor Gord Robinson, a clause will be added to the audience conduct section, dealing with turning cell phones off prior to entering the council chambers.

The new Procedural By-law was approved Committee of council on Monday, As some aspects of the new By-law were included to bring it into compliance with the new Municipal Act, which takes effect January 1,2008, this Bylaw had to be passed before the new year.