

Orono Weekly Times

Clarington maintains unwilling host status for now

Wednesday, May 13/09

Clarington councillors were in no mood to discuss an 11th hour amendment to the energy from waste (EFW) Host Community Agreement at Monday night's council meeting.

Clarington has been selected by the Region as the preferred site for a proposed EFW facility, to burn up to 40,000 tons of residual household waste a year.

Mayor Jim Abernethy praised Clarington Chief Administrative Officer Frank Wu for bringing forward what he considered was a good agreement with the Region of Durham.

"I would like to congratulate our CAO for doing such a fine job, and negotiating everything we were looking for in the agreement," he stated. Other councillors were not happy with the way the final agreement was dropped on their desks just prior to the 7 p.m. council meeting.

"The way this thing is being handled could make me more resolute," Councillor Adrian Foster told the Orono Times on Tuesday. "For a decision of this magnitude to be dropped in front of us at the last minute, it was clearly orchestrated," he said.

A number of residents addressed council asking them to maintain their position of an unwilling host for the proposed EFW facility.

"This report [the host community agreement report] reflects a willingness to expose the public to health and financial risks in exchange for the promise of municipal infrastructure, land and cash," Linda Gasser told councillors.

"I ask that all of you vote to keep us unwilling," stated Kerry Meydam. "To send the message to the REgion that they can't exchange our health or the health of future generations for royalties or empty promises."

In the host community agreement report on the agenda for Monday's meeting, Wu listed 12 items which were agreed to by Clarington and Region of Durham. He also listed three major items, proposed by Clarington, which the Region had not agreed to by their last negotiating meeting held on Wednesday May 6.

Prior to Monday night's meeting, Wu presented councillors with an addendum to his report, which contained a resolution to the three outstanding items. "AS late as 3:30 or 4:00 o'clock today, the Regional CAO contacted me and made a revised proposal for me to consider," Wu told Councillors. "That proposal is on your desk."

Clarington had asked that payments in lieu of property taxes be made to the municipality for an amount no less the \$650,000. The Region's proposal acknowledges that payments in the vicinity of \$650,000 will be made to Clarington, but could not guarantee the amount until MPAC allocated an assessed value to the facility.

Clarington's request of a \$2 per ton royalty on any wastes coming to the facility from outside the Regions of York or Durham (York Region partnered with Durham Region on the proposed incinerator project) was not granted. Instead, the Region is proposing a \$10 per ton royalty for any waste coming from Toronto. The terms of reference for the EFW states that the waste to managed in this facility may include residual waste from neighbouring non Greater Toronto Area municipalities that may provide disposal capacity for residues created by the burning of garbage. While the facility was never intended to burn Toronto waste,

Wu said, "With EFW facilities one can never tell what will happen years down the road, this is to protect Clarington's interests," he stated.

Clarington had asked the Region to upgrade the sanitary sewer and water services to the proposed Science Park at the east end of Bowmanville, at Bennett Road north of the 401. The Region has now agreed to begin the environmental assessment process for servicing the Park.

In exchange for the accepting these proposals, Wu is recommending the municipality become a willing host for the EFW. In January of this year, Clarington council adopted an 'unwilling host' status for the proposed EFW. The four local councillors out-voted the three regional councillors to attain this status. Councillors decided to hold a special council meeting at 9 a.m. Friday, to debate and vote on whether or not to accept the latest host community agreement.

All four local councillors told the Orono Times, following Monday's meeting, there was nothing in the agreement or the addendum to the agreement that would make them change their "Unwilling Host" position.

Foster said he felt they were being rushed into making a decision. "I'm not convinced we need to do this immediate," Foster stated. "We are still waiting for studies to be completed."

Councillor Willie Woo said he won't support any EFW decision because he is inherently opposed to mass burn.

"We haven't found out if it's safe yet," said Councillor Ron Hooper. He also said that all the calls and e-mails he has received on this issue have all been against the proposed EFW.

Councillor Gord Robinson said he wants a legal opinion of the agreement from the municipal solicitor. He is afraid for Clarington's position if the incinerator project goes ahead and Clarington has no agreement and receives nothing. The \$10 per ton fee for Toronto garbage is a "joke" according to Robinson.

Clarington's three regional councillors: Mayor Jim Abernethy, Councillors Charlie Trim and Mary Novak have always voted to move the EFW project forward. They just need one local councilor to change their mind on the "unwilling host" status, to defeat that position.