

Everyone deserves a say

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One of the redeeming aspects of municipal politics is that councillors are your neighbours. If you have an issue that needs to be dealt with your councillor can be easily reached.

That cannot be said about politicians at the provincial or federal levels who oftentimes need representatives to meet with constituents while they take care of business in Toronto or Ottawa. And if your representative happens to hold a portfolio in addition to being your MPP or MP you may not ever hear directly from them.

But municipal politicians are accessible and on any Monday evening they hold meetings the public is invited to attend. This accessibility has been used to its fullest extent recently given the hotly debated energy from waste issue. Hundreds of residents have attended council meetings to debate the proposal of locating an incinerator here in Clarington.

Council though is looking to limit debate on this issue and any other contentious issue in the future by imposing a curfew for meetings and shortening the length of time delegations can speak from 10 minutes to five. While we cannot disagree there were some marathon meetings held concerning the proposed incinerator we would also argue it is the right of every resident who wants to speak to be given that courtesy. If that carries a meeting overtime then the sessions should be held over for another day rather than pushing through one lengthy, late night affair.

The way the proposed bylaw is worded however, gives us pause. "The meeting shall adjourn at 11 p.m., if the meeting is still in session at that time, and will reconvene at such other day as directed by resolution."

What if councillors resolve to not continue debate on an issue Does it just end there We would hope not.

We agree a delegation who presents at the General Purpose and Administration Committee meeting should not be able to make the same presentation to council. That's just redundant. But the delegation must be allowed to make their view heard, even if time runs short.

At the grass roots level, politics is all about people having their say. Debate shouldn't be stifled just because councillors are tired.

-- Clarington This Week