

Rules are rules and should be followed

Sun Apr 20, 2008

By: Metroland Durham Regional Media Group

When Mayor Jim Abernethy was first elected it was expected it would take him some time to learn the job. After all, he had no previous council experience.

But the honeymoon period is over, so we would expect the mayor would at least know the rules that govern council, or at least have people in place to remind him in case he forgets.

Clearly he doesn't.

How else can you explain the mayor's recent lobbying efforts to have himself made chairman of the Green Community Advisory Committee? This is the same man who voted against being an unwilling host to an incinerator. Now, out of the blue, the mayor seems to have developed a green thumb.

The Municipality of Clarington has several advisory committees, such as the Agricultural Advisory Committee and the 407 Community Advisory Committee. They're all important and involve members of the community taking an active role in shaping what happens in Clarington.

The rules for these committees are simple and state that no member of council, including the mayor, may act as chairman of a committee. Why then would Mayor Abernethy willingly admit that he had his executive assistant lobby committee members to have him put in place as chairman?

Orono resident Jim Richards made a good point when he asked if the mayor felt the rules apply to everybody but himself. We would concur. At a time when there is much debate concerning the environment in Clarington, we would argue the last place any elected official should be is as chairman of this committee.

Mayor Abernethy said he "felt this was a very important committee that needed some strong leadership" and he's right. But the strong leadership must come from within the committee itself and should not be influenced politically by an elected representative. Does the mayor not think highly of anyone on the committee? Or is this his attempt at controlling the committee's work?

Nobody from within the Green Community Advisory Committee put their name forward for chairman after it was made public the mayor wanted the job. Even without taking over the chairman post he's already influencing the committee in the important work they should be doing. This isn't right.

Mayor Abernethy should do the right thing and stop pressuring people to break the rules. He should just accept there are some things he can't control and he should deal with those that he can.