

Council disregards staff, peer reviewer's main recommendation on incinerator

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By Jennifer Stone

CLARINGTON -- Council has spurned a recommendation from Clarington staff and peer reviewers hired by the Municipality that site selection for the proposed incinerator be delayed, until more specific information is available.

The decision amounts to tacit willingness to host the incinerator in Courtice, say opponents to the plan. But, that's just not so, says a Clarington local councillor.

"I just wanted to see the process move forward," said local councillor Ron Hooper, who joined forces with Clarington's three Regional councillors to have the motion forgoing the staff and reviewer's recommendation pass 4-3.

"We're not saying we're not going to be an unwilling host," said Coun. Hooper.

Incinerator opponent Wendy Bracken isn't convinced.

"I'm extremely disappointed," she said. "I cannot understand it given that the peer reviewers identified fundamental flaws, especially with regard to public health and safety.

"It was obvious that site selection cannot be separated from knowledge of vendor and technology and site-specific studies being completed," said Ms. Bracken. "Those things have to go together for the best protection of human health."

The motion passed by Clarington council "without a question" says Clarington will be a willing host, said Barry Bracken, another opponent.

Under the motion passed by council, the peer reviewers' and staff comments will be adopted as Clarington's position on the site selection process. As well, the regions of Durham and York have been asked to address issues identified by the peer reviewers and the regions have been asked to ensure the Maximum Achievable Control Technology for emissions and monitoring will be met. However, the recommendations that two sites be carried forward and that site selection also be delayed until the business case for the incinerator is complete were dropped from the motion recommended by staff.

A number of delegates came forward before the decision was made, to ask Clarington to declare itself an unwilling host to the proposed incinerator, which would burn residual waste from Durham and York.

One was Dave Renaud, head of the local CAW Regional Environmental Council. The CAW council last weekend passed an emergency resolution stating their opposition to incineration.

"My understanding is that (GM) has an EFW (Energy From Waste facility)," Clarington Mayor Jim Abernethy said after hearing of the resolution.

The mayor also questioned Mr. Renaud on his familiarity with the emissions coming from GM.

"As the environmental arm of the UAW (sic), you should be addressing that," said the mayor, who suggested eventually perhaps Durham's incinerator could replace GM's incinerator, using a steam line to heat the plant.

"You're attacking the company that has the largest number of voters in this area, and I'm not sure that's a good thing to do," said Mr. Renaud after the mayor questioned him about GM's emissions and use of incineration.

Several delegates said they felt declaring Clarington's unwillingness to host would strengthen the Municipality's bargaining position with the Region.

"It's the biggest political card you have, and if you don't play it soon, it's worthless," said Linda Gasser.

But what was passed doesn't preclude that, said Coun. Hooper.

"We're just saying we want to move on to the next stage in the process," he said.