

Council seeks delay in EFW site selection

Clarington council will be asking the Region of Durham to delay their selection of a site for the proposed energy from waste (EFW) facility.

Councillor Adrian Foster, put forward the motion at Monday night's council meeting, requesting the Region delay final site selection of the proposed EFW until such time as the technology, vendor and business case has been determined. Clarington's four local councillors -- Adrian Foster, Ron Hooper, Gord Robinson and Willie Woo supported the motion. Clarington's three Regional councillors -- Mary Novak, Charlie Trim and Mayor Jim Abernethy voted against the motion. The outcome of the vote was applauded by members of the public in the council chamber.

Many of the citizens concerned with the EFW proposal had urged council to ask the Region to delay the site selection decision, which is scheduled to be made at next week Wednesday's Regional council meeting. Clarington Planning Staff has also made the recommendation to delay the site selection decision in a December 10 report to council.

Project consultants have identified a site in Courtice, south of the 401, east of Courtice Road as their recommended preferred site for the proposed York/Durham EFW. The recommended preferred site was approved by the Joint Waste Management Committee last Tuesday, and by the Region's Works Committee, (which is chaired by Councillor Trim), at their meeting last week Wednesday.

The Courtice site was selected from a short list of four potential sites, three of which are in Clarington, the other one is in East Gwillimbury in York Region. York Region entered the EFW project as a 50/50 partner with Durham Region, but has since pulled back their commitment to 12 percent.

Clarington Planning Staff and their hired consultants have identified a number of deficiencies and flaws in the Region's process which identified the Clarington 01 site as the preferred site.

The Region's report rated the effects of the proposed EFW on the air quality at Clarington 01 site, and the East Gwillimbury site as 'neutral'. The differences between the two airsheds are extreme, according to Bracken. She refers to two tables in Annex A of the Regions own Site Selection Report which show the total industrial emission of some key air pollutants within 20 km of each site. The total industrial emissions for the Clarington site of pollutants such as Carbon Monoxide, Oxides of Nitrogen, Particulate Matter and others was 24,600 tonnes per year, while the rating at the East Gwillimbury site for the same pollutants was 1,300 tonnes per year. "What kind of toxic soup would Clarington residents be living in if you decide to site the EFW at Clarington 01, which is next door to the most major polluter in the airshed; St Mary's Cement,?" Bracken asked councillors. "How could our Regions' consider adding to Clarington's burden with the emissions from an incinerator?"

Durham Region's Health and Social Services Committee passed a motion in their meeting last week Thursday, similar to Foster's motion, requesting the Region delay site selection until the vendor and technology are selected, and the business case for the project has been completed. Ajax council adopted a similar motion at a council meeting last year, and a committee of Oshawa Council voted unanimously to adopt a similar motion at a meeting held on Monday.

"Given that we could be the host community, it's important we listen to other municipalities," stated Foster when presenting his motion.

"Why should we wait for Ajax and Oshawa council to lead the way?" asked Councillor Woo. "This will be sited in our community if approved," he stated, "we should be leading the way."

Bracken said she was pleased with the motion to defer making a decision on the preferred site, after Monday's meeting. "We have to know the vendor and the technology to get the right answers. So much information is missing," she stated.

Clarington's planning staff had recommended in their December 10th report on the Region's site selection process, that a decision on the preferred EFW site be delayed until the technology and vendor have been selected, and the business case completed. Clarington council voted to adopted an amended version of their staffs' recommendation. Through a motion by Trim, which was supported by councillors Hooper, Novak and the Mayor, the recommendation to delay site selection was removed.

"This is a very important issue, and I don't believe that was the way to go," said the Mayor following Monday's vote. "But that's the democratic process," he stated later in the meeting.