

April 23/08

Mayor defends decorum in council chambers

Clarington's Procedural By-law calls for decorum in the council chambers and Mayor Jim Abernethy is going to be the keeper of the decorum.

On three occasions at Monday night's council meeting, the Mayor asked presenters to retract statements they had made.

The first was Ms. Colleen Knight of Oshawa who was speaking to council against the proposed energy-from-waste facility. She was asked to retract the statement she made that Mayor Abernethy was not King Henry VIII; meaning he could not change the religion that existed just because he did not like it. Knight obliged and retracted her statement, and went on to continue her presentation.

Jim Richards was called "out of line" by the Mayor when he said Regional Chairman Roger Anderson, was a bully. Richards would not retract that statement so the Mayor would not allow him to continue with his presentation. Earlier this month Richards was presented a Certificate of Recognition by Council, acknowledging the "Ontario Medal of Good Citizenship" he recently received from the Province of Ontario

Mr. Barry Bracken was asked to withdraw the statement he made referring to Chairman Anderson and his "cronies," which he did. Later in his presentation, Bracken referred to Regional Councillors as sheep who continue to follow their leader. He withdrew that statement when Abernethy asked him to, but he would not apologize for making it. Bracken told the Mayor he probably would not like the rest of what he had to say, so the Mayor asked him to sit down.

At the end of Monday's council meeting, Mayor Abernethy introduced a motion asking Jim Richards to forward an apology to council prior to him making any more presentations. From the audience seating area, Richards said, "Don't hold your breath." At that point the Mayor asked him to leave the meeting. Referring to the Mayor's motion, Councillor Adrian Foster said, "This seems extreme. What did he say that was so onerous to earn the wrath of council? I didn't find his comments so distasteful."

Abernethy introduced a similar motion asking Barry Bracken to apologize, which was also adopted.

"We're trying to bring a level of decorum into these chambers," said the Mayor, "and not use this council as a platform to discredit other individuals."