

Committee chairmanship rules to change

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By: By Jennifer Stone

CLARINGTON -- Rules governing who may chair community advisory committees may change, after concerns were raised over Clarington's mayor's chairmanship of the Green Community Advisory Committee.

A report going to Clarington's General Purpose and Administration committee Monday proposes changing the rules to allow members of council to head up the committees on an interim basis, for up to 18 months.

Mayor Jim Abernethy actively lobbied, then took the position as chairman of the new committee last fall, even though current rules governing such advisory committees specifically stipulate members of council must not be in that position.

The first report from staff on the matter OK'd the mayor's rule-breaking, saying no concerns had been raised by the committee on the issue.

But both a current and former member of the committee have raised concerns. Ron Collis, who currently sits as the Clarington Board of Trade representative on the committee, said he felt having the mayor as chairman denigrated the community advisory role of such groups.

Kristin McKinnon-Rutherford sat as a community member on the committee for its first few meetings before resigning from the group. The committee was so new and the decision on who would chair it was made so quickly, that she had concerns, she said in a letter to council.

"I suggested an interim or rotating chair until committee members could gain familiarity around the role and responsibilities of the chair position," Ms. McKinnon-Rutherford said.

But another member of the group, Elva Reid, has defended the mayor's chairmanship of the committee, saying the mayor's high profile made him an ideal candidate for the job.

But there are others who could do a good job, said Ms. McKinnon-Rutherford in her letter.

"The most awe-inspiring community leaders I have seen in action over the past eight months come from the very community that this committee espouses to represent," Ms. McKinnon-Rutherford wrote. "The quality of your catch depends on where you cast your net."

The matter goes to committee Monday morning, then to council for final approval May 5.