

Metroland News

## Letters to the editor, to council decry mayor

### Numerous concerns raised

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By Jennifer Stone

CLARINGTON -- The mayor is misinterpreting or ignoring rules, and not applying them fairly, charge some residents.

Recent presentations and letters to Clarington councillors, as well as numerous letters to the editor of this paper, have been critical of Mayor Jim Abernethy on a number of matters, including his chairmanship of the Green Living Community Advisory Committee.

But the mayor isn't answering questions on the matter. A written request for interview sent to his administrative staff was met with a voice mail indicating the mayor "said everything he needed to say during (last Monday's General Purpose and Administration committee) meeting, and you heard what he needed to say."

The mayor's comments during the meeting dealt only with the Green Living Community Advisory Committee chairmanship. Though the rules explicitly stipulate members of council are not to chair such committees, the mayor lobbied for and received the position. Last week, six months after the fact, councillors altered the rules to allow members of council to chair new committees on an interim basis for up to six months.

The wrangling over the chairmanship of the committee has caused irreparable harm, suggested Bowmanville resident Louis Bertrand.

"Trying to recover from this current perception would be an effort that wouldn't pay off," Mr. Bertrand recently told councillors. "There would always be lingering doubts. The committee would have to be twice as good to be perceived as half as good."

The committee chairmanship isn't the only issue, say some members of the community.

"To me, the issue is about much more than the mayor finagling his way into the chairmanship of a community advisory committee," said Kristin McKinnon-Rutherford in a letter to council. "This incident is just one of many representing a significant impairment of attitude -- and a very core lack of respect for the office and the citizens of Clarington -- at the mayoral level."

The issue of rules also came up earlier this year after Clarington's four local councillors outvoted its three Regional councillors on a motion indicating Clarington would not be a willing host for a proposed incinerator. Shortly after the resolution was passed, the mayor voted at Regional council to move forward with the incinerator process, which some said contravened Clarington's procedural bylaw.

The bylaw indicates, under the Duties of the Mayor, that the mayor is to "represent and support the decisions of council, declaring its will and explicitly and implicitly obeying its decisions in all things."

Even more recently, the mayor has been criticized for stopping delegations from speaking, and in two cases, sanctioning people, requiring them to write letters of apology before appearing again in front of council or committee.

"Neither delegation should have been terminated and the penalty was unwarranted," said Orono resident Linda Gasser, noting it's important to allow people to state their position, even if it is critical of council.

"Do not allow anyone to misuse council's procedural power to stifle debate," she said.