

Metroland News

No support for shortening mayor's stint as Green Living committee chairman

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By Jennifer Stone

CLARINGTON -- An attempt to shorten Mayor Jim Abernethy's contentious term as chairman of Clarington's Green Living Community Advisory Committee did not receive council support.

Local Councillor Ron Hooper asked this week that council reconsider its preliminary decision to allow Mayor Abernethy to sit as interim chairman of the Green Living committee for an additional six months and instead, shorten the interim tenure to two months.

Residents, including some members of the committee, had come forward to state concerns with the mayor chairing the committee, since the rules explicitly say members of council must not hold the position.

Not only did Mayor Abernethy take the job, but he admitted to having his executive assistant call committee members before the meeting at which voting took place, to lobby to put the mayor in the chair.

A staff report initially suggested allowing the mayor to stay on in the role, but it was voted down by council. A recommendation then came forward from staff, suggesting allowing the mayor to maintain the role for 18 months. Council amended that to allow members of council, including the mayor, to sit as chair of new community advisory committees for six months on an interim basis. In the case of the Green committee, the six months started a few weeks ago, despite the fact the mayor has already been in the role since September.

"Mr. Mayor, with all due respect, sir, I know the reason you wish to be the chair for the Green Committee is because it's something you truly believe in," said Coun. Hooper Tuesday morning. But, "I don't think we should be changing the term date."

But the suggestion didn't receive support from the council, which was down two members with Adrian Foster and Willie Woo absent when the meeting was not completed by the 11 p.m. curfew and reconvened Tuesday morning. Both absent councillors had work commitments.

Local councillor Gord Robinson suggested the six months was a guideline and asked the mayor if he would be seeking a change in chairmanship "closer to the beginning than the end" of those six months.

"That's the decision of the committee, it's not my decision," Mayor Abernethy said. "My understanding is that the committee is and always has been very supportive of me being the chair of the committee . . . We have one or two individuals on the committee who seem to be upset that the committee chose me as the chair of the committee."