

Clarington punts it back to the Region

Some parts of secret document aren't negotiable, says resolution

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CLARINGTON -- The Municipality has put the ball back into the Region's court when it comes to a host community agreement aimed at an incinerator being built in Clarington.

Council held yet another lengthy, hastily-called closed-door meeting Tuesday, to look at the Region's most recent offer for a host community agreement.

After more than four hours behind closed doors, councillors passed two resolutions, one indicating that parts of what the Region offered were not acceptable. The other indicated support for the Region's business case for the incinerator but asked for further information on safety and economics.

Councillors said "there are certain positions within the agreement that are not negotiable, and they took a hard position on that," Clarington CAO Franklin Wu said. "The ball is back in the court of the Region."

Details of what the Region offered remain confidential as negotiations continue.

This was the second such meeting in as many weeks for Clarington councillors. Last week, councillors looked at an offer and sent it back, indicating if the Region agreed to a lengthy wish list from the Municipality, "Clarington council is prepared to reconsider its 'unwilling host' stance."

That stance still hasn't changed, say councillors.

But some feel the Region is going to build the incinerator in Clarington anyway, so it's a matter of getting the best deal possible.

"We want to be sure we get the best, safest facility, and that it will somehow benefit the people of Clarington," Councillor Ron Hooper said.

Months ago, it became clear as a result of comments from Regional Chairman Roger Anderson, that Clarington's stance on the matter really didn't matter, Coun. Hooper said.

"I get the impression it's going to forge ahead anyway," he said.

But Orono resident Linda Gasser said Tuesday's motion was less about protecting Clarington and more about showing support to the Region,

"Mayor Jim Abernethy couldn't come to (Regional) council with a host community agreement in his back pocket but he could come with an endorsement of the business plan," Ms. Gasser said.

Only Clarington's four local councillors supported the motion, passed in January, indicating Clarington would not be a willing host. The three Regional councillors, including the mayor, voted against it.

Wednesday, Mayor Abernethy pointed out that the municipality has been negotiating the host agreement for almost a year and the unwilling motion was passed six months ago.

"Those things are a mixed message," he said.

If Clarington accepts a host community agreement, it's an indication of the Municipality's willingness to host, said the mayor.

"It clearly established that Clarington council supported the business case, subject to negotiations with the Region on the host community agreement. If we signed the contract, we would be the host community," Mayor Abernethy said. "On the basis that we signed a contract, we would be a willing host."

-- files from Reka Szekely