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Lucrative Veridian board positions still undecided

It appears Clarington council is not finished with its appointments to the board of Veridian Corporation.

As Clarington is a shareholder of Veridian, the utility company formed in 1999 by the amalgamation of Ajax, Pickering and Clarington public utility companies, it is entitled to four board members: two elected representatives and two community members. Three of these members are appointed by Clarington council; the fourth member, a community member, will be appointed by Veridian.

In the past, Clarington's Mayor and a councillor have filled the elected positions, and councillors appointed a member of the community.

Last week, Mayor Adrian Foster and rookie Councillor Joe Neal were elected to the Veridian Board as Clarington's council representatives.

When the nomination was made last week by Councillor Hooper to appoint former Clarington councillor Jim Schell, who still owns property in Clarington but is a Muskoka resident, to the Veridian Board, Councillor Neal moved to table the motion for a week.

He said he wanted time to research the candidates to see who would best represent the needs of the Municipality as a Veridian shareholder as well as the utility's customers, and Clarington taxpayers.

This week, when the nomination was made again to appoint Jim Schell to the Veridian Board, Neal moved to amend the motion to allow for a process whereby the position would be advertised and qualified applicants could submit their resumes, which would be ranked and the best candidate selected by council.

While Neal said he was not opposed to Schell's nomination to the Board, he said, "It is disconcerting from the point of view of openness and transparency, that we're voting on Mr. Schell. I think Mr. Schell is a class individual, I would like to see him compete for the position," Neal said.

"By virtue of what we are doing, Mr. Schell is competing openly," Mayor Foster replied.

Neal's amendment did not carry, nor did Schell's nomination. Councillor Wendy Partner then nominated Frank Stapleton of Newtonville, another former councillor, to the position. Her motion was adopted.

Partner said after the meeting that Frank Stapleton had contacted her to let her know he was interested in the position.

At the end of the meeting, Councillor Willie Woo announced that he will be giving a Notice of Motion to reconsider Council's Veridian Board appointment.

A reconsideration motion requires a two-thirds majority vote to get it on the table. Woo's Notice will be dealt with early in January.

At last week's meeting when Councillor Ron Hooper began reading the list of nominations to the Veridian Board, Councillor Mary Novak stood up and said she had withdrawn her name from the list because of some "finagling" going on.

Foster had been council's nomination to the Veridian Board for the 2006-2010 term of office, but because Novak wanted the position, Foster and Novak split the term serving two years each. Veridian pays its board members \$12,500 annually for attending four board meetings.