

THE CORPORATION OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF NEEBING

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF COUNCIL,
SITTING AS COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Held at the Municipal Office
On Friday, March 1, 2019

PRESENT: Mayor Erwin Butikofer
Councillor at Large Gordon Cuthbertson
Crooks Councillor Brian Wright
Pardee Councillor Curtis Coulson
Pearson Councillor Gary Gardner

REGRETS: Blake Councillor Mark Thibert
Scoble Councillor Brian Kurikka

Rosalie A. Evans, Solicitor-Clerk

1. PRELIMINARY MATTERS:

- (a) Call to Order: Mayor Butikofer called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.
- (b) Attendance: Attendance was recorded.
- (c) Declarations of Interest:

No declarations of interest were brought forward.

2. APPLICATION FOR REDUCTION IN TAXES UNDER SECTION 357 OF THE MUNICIPAL ACT, 2001

Mayor Butikofer called out the applicants' names. As there was no response, and as the gallery was filling with people interested in Item 3 on the Agenda, Mayor Butikofer suggested this matter be tabled.

2.1 Report from Treasurer/Deputy Clerk regarding a request to write off taxes on the basis of a demolition

2.2 Public Meeting Relating to the Application

Res. No. 2019-03-01

Moved by: Councillor Coulson

Seconded by: Councillor Gardner

BE IT RESOLVED THAT Items 2.1 and 2.2 be tabled, to be lifted from the table when Item 3 on the Agenda has been completed.

3. APPLICATION TO AMEND THE OFFICIAL PLAN (SCHEDULE "B" MAPPING) AND COMPREHENSIVE ZONING BY-LAW 2017-035:

3.1 Report from Solicitor/Clerk regarding Application Z01-2019, Submitted by Joseph Zawada, to Amend the Official Plan (Schedule B) and Zoning By-law

The Solicitor-Clerk overviewed the report, as well as the supplementary report, placed on members' desks this afternoon. She noted that she agreed with the comment included in those submitted by Thora Cartlidge with respect to the zoning designation needing to be "commercial" rather than "institutional", based on the fact that the definition of "Personal Service Shop" in the Zoning By-law includes a "medical clinic". She apologized for the error.

The Solicitor-Clerk advised that the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing was gathering comments from partner ministries and expected to be able to provide Council with all of its comments towards the end of April. The Solicitor-Clerk therefore recommended that no decisions be made today, but that another meeting be arranged after the Provincial comments are received.

3.2 Public Meeting Relating to the Application

The applicant, Joseph Zawada, through use of the projector, demonstrated the location of the proposed clinic on the lot. He reviewed for the gallery a schematic of the building, outlining the various rooms in the clinic, and their intended uses. These include: a laboratory, a physiotherapy room (similar to a gym), an x-ray room, a pharmacy, and waiting rooms with offices for use by doctors or dentists. Appropriate rest rooms and staff rooms were also included.

Councillor Wright asked, based on comments he had received, whether there was a methadone clinic being considered. The applicant confirmed that there is no methadone clinic, no psychiatric treatment and no overnight patient stays involved in the proposal.

Councillor Coulson commented on the fact the clinic is to be located in one corner of the property, and asked what the balance of the land will be used for. The applicant indicated he had not made that decision as yet.

As there were no further questions from members of Council, Mayor Butikofer called for anyone present in the gallery who wished to speak in favour of the application.

Ms. Patricia Booth Stajkowski advised that she is in support of a full service clinic in Neebing. She expressed her opinion that services such as this one would grow the Municipality and support its people.

Mr. and Mrs. Rudy Stajkowski advised of their support for the application, for the same reasons.

Mr. Ziggy Polkowski gave his opinion that nothing is needed more in Neebing than a clinic. The population is aging.

As there was no one else present wishing to speak in favour of the application, Mayor Butikofer called for anyone present in the gallery who wished to speak in opposition to the application.

Mr. Aaron Breukleman gave his opinion that the site is within a "farming hub". He believes that people coming out from the City to the clinic would object to farming practices such as large equipment on the roads and odours. Although this is a relatively small piece of land, there is not much good farmland in Neebing and what is there should be preserved.

Mr. Fritz Jaspers indicated he hated to speak against business for Neebing. A clinic is a worthy development, but not on this particular lot. He expressed that the Thunder Bay Farmers' Co-operative, which is a not-for-profit operation owned by farmers, produces smoke, dust, and fertilizer, and involves significant traffic, including farm tractors. He opined that Agriculture businesses and medical clinics "don't mix", and that locating a clinic here would bring problems for the Municipality and for farmers. The soil on this property is "Class 2" and should be preserved for farming. Mr. Jaspers cited some of the policies in the Provincial Policy Statement in support of his position.

Ms. Christina Mol indicated that she lives in the Slate River area, and that she has a PhD with a background in soil sciences. She referred to her written comments previously submitted. Class 2 soils are the best soils in Northwestern Ontario. There are not enough frost free days for Class 1 soil. The hay grown on this property may not be a "high commodity" crop, but it supports the local agricultural businesses. Ms. Mol outlined problems that farm businesses endure relating to complaints about manure spreading, fertilizer, insecticides and herbicides, even when properly and responsibly applied.

Mr. John Graham advised he is a dairy farmer with property across from the Applicant's property, and he is also on the Board of Directors for the Farmer's Co-operative. He strongly objects to the development. He described the site as "right in the middle" of most farmland in Thunder Bay.

Ms. Thora Cartlidge, a registered professional planner who is resident in Neebing, reviewed the written comments she had submitted. She believes that a medical clinic would be a welcome service and might even attract new residents, but she objects to the location. It is on prime agricultural land which has been productive for over a century. She reviewed policies in the Provincial Planning Statement, and indicated she does not agree with Administration's suggestion that the Northern Growth Plan take precedence over the Provincial Policy Statement – she felt both could be accommodated without either taking precedence.

Mr. Ben Breukleman read the written comments he previously submitted. He added that he has heard the site referred to as "just a hay field", but what people don't understand is that there is actually a hay shortage at present, which extends into Manitoba. This site is very productive, yielding two hay cuttings per year.

Mayor Butikofer asked about the hay yield. Mr. Breukleman replied that they typically get 120 round bales on the first cut, and approximately 80 on the second.

Mr. Brian Jaspers advised he is part owner of the land opposite this one across from Highway 61. As a young farmer, he wants to see a future in farming in this area. You cannot “make” good soil. He also expressed support for a medical clinic, provided it was not put on this site.

Mr. Joel Veurink operates a dairy farm with his father, who spoke earlier. They own 180 acres north of Boundary Drive. He is strongly opposed to the application because of the location. Mr. Veurink feels that area farmers would experience complaints from patrons as well as staff at a medical clinic. He also expressed his opinion that approval of the application would set a precedent.

Councillor Wright asked whether any of the other businesses in the area had complained about the farm practices. Mr. Ben Breukleman, speaking from the gallery, advised that all of the businesses in the area are owned and operated by farmers, who understand the practices and do not complain.

Mr. Tim Janssens also spoke to the application. He owns and operates a dairy farm within Neebing, but a bit distant from this site. He described the complaints he experiences from non-farming neighbours, and how he does his best to operate his farm in a manner that will be least interfering for them.

Councillor Cuthbertson asked whether the problems Mr. Janssens experiences are typically from urban dwellers who move to the countryside, who do not understand what it takes to run a farm. Mr. Janssens responded he has run into that situation “more than once”.

Mr. Fred Breukleman advised he and his son (Ben) have rented the Applicant’s site from its former owners for several years. He indicated good farmland is in high demand and should not be taken away “almost on a whim”. He described the years and dollars of investment required to create good farmland. When the land is taken away from farming, it is lost and re-investment is required to create more. He expressed his opinion that there are many other sites in Neebing where a clinic could be built.

Mayor Butikofer, citing a report from the Thunder Bay Area Food Strategy (page 65) which indicates that farming acreages fluctuate from year to year. Ms. Christina Mol, speaking from the gallery, indicated that report was describing a winter wheat experiment. Yields from winter wheat were very disappointing – farmers do better with spring wheat – so the winter wheat is not grown anymore.

Councillor Cuthbertson asked Mr. Fred Breukleman how many years are required between land clearing and getting productive soil. Mr. Breukleman responded that it depends on how it is done. The use of machinery can speed up the process, but it is expensive. Once the land is cleared, fertility levels still take time to build up to get to maximum productivity.

Ms. Alison Meany advised that she owns property across Boundary Drive from this site, and echoes the sentiments expressed here by others. She said visitors to her residence complain about manure-spreading odours. She expressed her opinion that there will be lots of complaints and lots of problems if the clinic is located at the proposed site.

Mr. Darren Fisk, general manager of the Farmers’ Co-operative, stated that the Co-op is not opposed to economic development in Neebing. The Municipality needs growth and needs to

expand its tax base – and no one objects to the development of medical clinic – but not at this location. He objects on two grounds – the first being that this is valuable agricultural land, and the second that the operation of a clinic would hinder the daily operations of the Co-op. The two uses are incompatible. He asked Council members to remember that the Co-op serves the residents of Neebing, even though it is situated in Oliver-Paipoonge. Mr. Fisk went on to describe traffic problems and suggested the location would create a public safety issue. Mr. Fisk cited policies in the Provincial Policy Statement and Neebing's Official Plan that support his position. He stated that agriculture is so important to the Province that it provides subsidies to farmers.

Mayor Butikofer described Neebing's concerns with property tax benefits provided by the Province to farmers very little compensation to Neebing. It is not physically possible for Neebing to reach the threshold of three (3%) percent farmland in order to receive full compensation. He asked whether the farming community would support Neebing's position that the threshold should be removed. Mr. Fisk responded that he felt farmers would support that position.

Ms. Christina Mol, speaking from the gallery, opined that Neebing should not be penalized because of its rocks and cliffs. Councillor Cuthbertson commented that "if there is a way to get the threshold to zero, we want to hear that".

Mr. Walter Schep advised that he is the owner of Thunder Oak Cheese farm, a business his parents started on the home farm. He also expressed his support for a business in Neebing – but not on this site. He described comments his clientele have made, complaining about farm practices. Patrons tell him they like buying his products through the farmers' market in town rather than coming out to the storefront to encounter dirty roads and smells. Mr. Schep stated that he had grown grain on the Applicant's site prior to the Breuklemans. It is a good piece of land with many opportunities for cropping.

Mr. Martin Schep owns a dairy farm. He rents and owns land on Spruce Road west of the clinic. He stated he agreed with many of the other speakers. Clinic patrons and staff will complain about smells and large machinery operating on roadways. He feels it will be an issue, not just for him, but for the next generation of farmers as well.

Mr. Dillon Stajkowski stated he is curious as to why this location was selected by the applicant when there are a lot of other places a medical clinic would be welcomed. As a young farmer, he feels that development of a clinic on this site is a loss of opportunity for someone young like himself.

As there were no further speakers, Mayor Butikofer asked the Applicant whether he wished to address some of the concerns.

Mr. Zawada indicated that he has lived in urban settings and has experienced high-volume traffic. As such, he does not understand suggestions that the clinic would create a traffic problem at this site. There is no traffic issue on Boundary Drive.

He feels this site is the best site for a medical clinic – likely for the same reasons that the Thunder Bay Co-op felt this was the best site for its business.

Others have stated that the businesses in the vicinity of his site are all agriculture-related. He feels a medical clinic could also be described as agriculture-related, since farmers and their families need health care.

Mayor Butikofer advised the gallery that this concluded the public meeting relating to this Application, and that another meeting will be convened when Provincial comments are available.

As Item 3 on the Agenda had concluded, Item 2 was lifted from the table.

2. APPLICATION FOR ADJUSTMENT TO TAXES UNDER SECTION 357 OF THE MUNICIPAL ACT, 2001

2.1 Report from Treasurer/Deputy Clerk regarding a request to write off taxes on the basis of a demolition

Mayor Butikofer called out the applicants' names. There was no response. Members present advised that they did not require an overview of the report.

2.2 Public Meeting Relating to the Application

Mayor Butikofer asked whether there were any persons present to speak for or against this application. There was no response.

Rec. No. 2019-03-002

Moved by: Councillor Wright
Seconded by: Councillor Coulson

BE IT RESOLVED THAT, with respect to Item 2.1, Committee of the Whole recommend to Council that the time limits for the application as it applies to 2017 be waived;
AND, FURTHER, THAT the application for adjustment to taxes be approved.

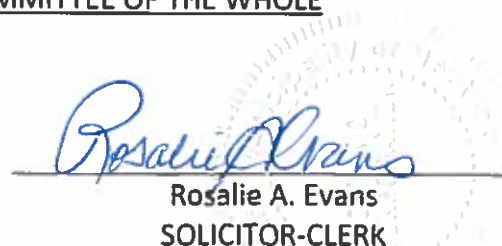
CARRIED ✓

4. ADJOURN THE MEETING:

There being no further business to attend to, Mayor Butikofer adjourned the meeting at 2:28 p.m.

SPECIAL MEETING OF COUNCIL, SITTING AS COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE


Erwin Butikofer
MAYOR


Rosalie A. Evans
SOLICITOR-CLERK