York Region

Water and Wastewater Public Consultation Centre

Meeting Notes

Public Consultation Centre 1, Meeting 3
Vellore Village Community Centre
1 Villa Royale Avenue, Vaughan
Vaughan, Ontario

November 23, 2006

Opening

Mr. Dave Hardy (Facilitator, Hardy Stevenson and Associates Limited) welcomed the 57 attendees, described the York Region and Durham Region Water and Wastewater Master Plan and Water for Tomorrow display boards and provided an overview of the agenda and purposes of the evening session.

Councillor-elect Jeff Laidlaw (Ward 2, King Township) was introduced. Dave also introduced Mr. Paul May, Director of Infrastructure for York Region. Mr. Michael Brooks, from RMI Consultants was introduced as leading the Water for Tomorrow study. Several local municipal staff introduced themselves. Dave then provided information about the agenda.

Dr. Hamid Hatami (Manager, Water and Wastewater, York Region) presented an overview of the York Region Water and Wastewater Master Plan study, growth projections and changes in Provincial legislation affecting the former Master Plan (see attached PowerPoint slides).

Mr. Stan Holden P.Eng. (Manager, MacViro Consultants, a division of GENIVAR Ontario Inc.) presented an overview of York Region's current water and wastewater system. (see attached PowerPoint slides).

Dialogue Session

Dave Hardy asked for comments and advice from residents and posed four questions*: 1) How can York Region improve its water and wastewater infrastructure?* He stated, York Region has provided information about the purposes of their study and the issues they propose to study. *2) Are there other matters they should be studying? 3) Have they missed anything?* The Region wants to develop sustainable infrastructure. They are thinking long-term and asking you: *4) What would it take for York's Water and Wastewater Servicing infrastructure to be recognized as the standard of sustainability?*

A resident asked whether the Master Plan will direct York Region toward stronger demand management. Mr. Brooks stated that a water demand management program has been in place in York Region for 8 years through the York Region Water Efficiency Master Plan. The program for the next ten years is being updated.

The resident suggested that York Region should implement tiered water pricing and water conservation. He observed that Canadians are prolific users of water. He also suggested that York Region pay more attention to climate change as it affects water supplies. The World Bank and Environment Canada have recognized this.

A resident stated that inflow and infiltration ("I & I") should be examined more closely in the Master Plan. He suggested that the YDSS (York Durham Sewage System) causes a significant drain on groundwater. Citing the examples of Queensville and Holland Landing, he shared his concern that the drain on groundwater by the YDSS would be a strain in a broad sense on the watershed.

Participants discussed whether I&I is an issue more appropriate addressed by local municipal utilities. A resident opined that fifty percent of I&I is associated with YDSS peak flows, and stated that it is a large issue that must be addressed in the Master Plan.

A resident stated that the Region is currently pumping sewage from one elevation level to another. He suggested that it would be more effective to pump sewage to one particular station instead of pumping the sewage all over the place. Participants observed that in the past, there were many smaller communities in York Region who had been connected to the Toronto system. The challenge for the Master Plan is to integrate the systems in a more efficient manner.

A resident observed that the Province wants to have sewer discharges into the YDSS and other trunk sewer systems rather into rivers, even if the outflow is treated at a tertiary level. Mr. Paul May indicated that this was done was for

environmental reasons as typical receiving bodies of water did not have sufficient volumes. He noted that the flow of sewage also represented a significant portion of volume in small water bodies like creeks and the Province wanted to address this. A resident pointed out that water temperature was also an issue.

Participants also discussed the effect of growth in York Region on provincial policy. Since the 1970s the population in York Region has grown fast, and the Region now has to address 4-5 times the volume of water and waste water. Paul May added that there is no way that those streams could have handled the flow.

A resident asked about the construction of a larger plant in Nobleton. Ms. Christine Hill, XCG Consultants, observed that this was an example where the Humber River could receive flows from the expansion of both Nobleton and Kleinburg. The consultant and resident acknowledged that other studies had examined the practice, and it was also important to review the assumptions as part of the Master Plan update.

A resident stated she lives in Kleinburg and doesn't want the sewage plant expanded. She noted that one intention of opposing the Plant is to preserve the river; another intention is to hold back development. The fact that Nobleton is having significant population increase also impacts Kleinburg.

A Nobleton resident stated they likes the idea of a (local) sewage treatment plant because we've seen the difference between communities with and without (e.g. Bolton is connected to the Peel Regional pipe, and is growing substantially, whereas Kleinburg has a local treatment plant and grew slowly). A sewage treatment plant does help to control development.

The resident stated he would encourage York Region to develop local plants so long as the plants provided tertiary treatment. The Kleinburg plant provides tertiary treatment, and the consultant that was considering Nobleton looked at the effect that Kleinburg's treatment plant had on the Humber River. There were redside dace in the Humber River, which indicated that the water was very pure (these are very sensitive fish).

The resident stated that she believes that the solution to pollution is not dilution, but to make water cleaner. That's what the Kleinburg plant is doing and that's what the Nobleton plant should do. The idea of moving sewage that is north of the Oak Ridges Moraine ("ORM") or across the ORM is not good.

She stated that the Master Plan should assess the practice of connecting to Peel's regional pipe for sewage. The Master Plan needs to trade off saving energy vs. pumping sewage over the moraine.

Another resident stated that the Master Plan should examine whether York Region should make greater efforts to implement more tertiary treatment. The resident stated that he would prefer that York Region municipalities have local treatment plants. He observed that since Newmarket is already connected to the YDSS, its sewage should go north. That saves energy and doesn't move water from one watershed to another. The discussion pointed to Lake Simcoe already being under stress. Participants considered whether another large water body would be available.

A resident stated that the Master Plan should be considering a system that does not transfer water between watersheds. When you're pumping water from Newmarket south you're doing that. The YDSS pumps water from the Lake Simcoe region to the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority ("TRCA") zone. There are numerous pieces of Ontario and Federal legislation which say that this is not permitted.

A resident stated that the Master Plan should more closely examine water balances between water sheds, I & I and the movement of sewage across watersheds.

Another resident observed that water and wastewater trunk infrastructure appears to have been causing sinkholes. He pointed to a very large sinkhole at Highway 7 and Jane. The resident asked whether the Region is aware of the causes and effects of sinkholes. The resident opined that the Region's increasing requirement for stormwater management ponds may be a cause. He asked how many sinkholes have appeared recently and suggested that the matter be examined by the Master Plan. The resident also suggested that the Master Plan should anticipate greater storm intensity in the future.

A resident expressed concern that the Nobleton sewage system did not employ Zenon technology. It is an example of an old system. The Master Plan needs to assess a number of new technologies perceived as being environmentally superior. The Master Plan should be considering new technology as alternatives and/or requirements within the current system as a matter of policy.

The dialogue turned to advanced environmental innovation. A resident pointed out that the City of Toronto has looked at green roofs. He suggested that Toronto found it could save 12 million cubic metres a year in water savings, in addition to other benefits. In Europe they're fine with this type of environmental innovation (e.g. recycling grey water). The perception is different here. It's more than education. It's about changing adult decisions.

Another resident stated he would like the Master Plan to examine close-ended looped sewer systems. In such systems, the treated effluent is returned (taken to) to high water users (e.g. golf courses, tree nurseries, etc.) and used there.

Kleinburg could do much of the same. Another resident suggested that would result in an acceleration of golf courses. In considering environmental sustainability, the Master Plan should think about placing all new communities on small treatment plants and figuring out ways to put water back into the aquifer.

In terms of enhancing environmental sustainability, a resident suggested that there didn't appear to be a rationale for the percentage of land set aside for the Greenbelt protection area. Instead of 63 percent protected; why not increase the green belt protection area to 85 percent or decrease it to 55 percent? Does it have to do with flood lines?

Staff pointed out that the Greenbelt Act is a Provincial Act. The 63 percent figure is an observation about the protected area in York Region (when the Greenbelt Act was interpreted regionally), as opposed to a matter of policy. The reason for the Greenbelt is to protect significant land areas wherever they are located. Flood lines pertain to the creeks and setbacks.

In terms of growth related to water and wastewater servicing, the discussion turned to whether the legislation protecting the Greenbelt is stronger than the legislation protecting the moraine? A Regional staff member stated that the Acts are equivalent. Essentially what can happen in the Moraine (the permitted development and associated restrictions) and in the Greenbelt is about the same.

In response to a question about seeing housing development on the Moraine, the staff person responded that there are parts of the Moraine where the Province has allowed development as the ORM Plan has several land use designations. Overall, very little development is allowed.

As a closing remark, a resident stressed the importance of the study (York Region Water and Wastewater Master Plan Update) and the need to complete the Master Plan as soon as possible.

Dave Hardy thanked the participants for attending and indicated that notes from the session, the presentation slides, and the panels would be put up on the website (www.york.waterwastewatermasterplan.ca).

Notes: Mr. Sanjay Coelho

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