

Bid to protect stable neighbourhoods receives mixed public reviews

By Brock Weir

A bid to protect Aurora's stable neighbourhoods with a one-year interim control bylaw received mixed reaction from residents last week.

Dozens of residents filled Council chambers for last Tuesday's General Committee meeting, eager to hear what Council members had to say about a proposed Interim Control Bylaw which would be in place for one year while Aurora reviews existing bylaws and property standards when it comes to protecting established communities.

Such a move, they argued, would go a long way in protecting stable neighbourhoods from new residential builds, which they dubbed 'monster homes,' while others argued against the motion, stating an interim control bylaw could put a negative hit on their own property values.

'I think I am in favour of the [moratorium on new builds] but I wanted to ask if that means [if] new builds will be conforming to our Official Plan, or will they still be conforming to our old bylaws from 1968,' said Kennedy Street resident Marcia Kaye. 'These bylaws are a half-century old, and I just wanted to understand that.'

McClenny Drive resident George Skoulikas was of a similar mindset, stating, with some reservations, that the Interim Control Bylaw was a 'good idea.'

'The Interim Control Bylaw will only provide partial protection,' he said. 'While the use of the Interim Control Bylaw is a good idea dealing with minor variance applications, it does not prevent applications for new builds which will conform to existing zoning bylaws from being approved.'

'Currently, the existing zoning bylaw within stable neighbourhoods allow for a lot coverage of 35 per cent and a max height of 10 metres, resulting in homes much larger than the existing bungalows that exist in these neighbourhoods. Very large homes will continue to be developed within stable neighbourhoods until the current zoning bylaw is changed.'

Others shared this view that there were bigger issues on the table, arguing the Interim Control Bylaw, as proposed, fell well short of the mark.

'It doesn't appear that this interim control bylaw addresses any of the issues we have spoken about in that the building permits that were issued for some of these monster homes were clearly done in good faith, they were done legally, they were done appropriately, and we have had issues with the fact they were issued, period,' said resident Rebecca Beaton. 'We would like to ask, amongst neighbours, that this not be approved tonight. This does not address the problem.'

Ms. Beaton concluded by asking Council to 'come up with another solution where these monster homes, which do conform, apparently, cannot be built.'

The Interim Control Bylaw will put a moratorium in place for a year while a study is carried out on existing measures. This report, according to resident Robin Gray, was essential going forward.

'I have not heard anything about the report and this report needs to be done before the 2018 building season begins, or there should be a moratorium on permits,' she said. 'I too have a monster home in my backyard.'

A report and response to the review of stable neighbourhood policies and zoning permissions will be complete by late March or early April, noted Marco Ramunno, Aurora's Director of Planning.