

Council should have followed Tomlinson plan

Aurora Town Council has chosen to delay submission of the master plan for the nature reserve; this in order to have Cole Engineering Group create a second amended version. Apparently both plans will be submitted to the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority for approval.

One consequence of this will be to delay the start of the first phase of construction beyond the scheduled 2017 start date.

The main reason for the delay is the issue of adding several 'on-line ponds'.

The Ivy Jay nature reserve already contains on-line ponds and would not exist without them. For that matter, the Mackenzie Marsh is an on-line pond. David Tomlinson proposed the construction of several additional on-line ponds in the nature reserve in order to increase the diversity of plant and animal life.

The drop-board dams, associated with this kind of on-line pond, are cheaper to construct than the alternative and make it easier for volunteers to control the water flow.

Suggestions for the amended plan apparently include replacing one on-line pond with that alternative, a by-pass pond. A by-pass pond is a modification of an on-line pond and is more costly both to construct and maintain. Strictly speaking it is not an off-line pond, since it still draws water from a water course beside it.

The Council concern is that currently the Conservation Authority policies do not favour on-line ponds. In this regard, the focus of the Conservation Authority has been on the possibility of promoting cold-water fish migration.

On the other hand, it's also been noted that modern urban development is quite unlikely to promote cold-water fish migration (e.g. raised water temperatures).

Tomlinson's orientation is to save and enhance the actual rich natural environment which currently exists in Aurora and put it, including all its interrelated parts, on a more secure footing for the future.

Personally, I trust David Tomlinson's knowledge, experience and judgment in this matter. He's been studying multiple aspects of the Aurora nature reserve for 20 years. I've also read of him described locally as a landscape architect and a horticulturalist.

This hardly does justice to his experience and achievements in these areas. For instance, he was the Senior Landscape Officer for the City of Manchester (Britain's ninth largest city), a Principle Landscape Architect in the design and construction of Milton Keynes (UK) (a new town designed for a population of 300,000 people) and, in private business, he was commissioned to create the master plan for botanical gardens in Barinas, Venezuela (covering 130 hectares).

For better or worse, I think that the Aurora Town Council should have supported and submitted the Tomlinson master plan to the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority and then acted on the response. If that plan was not approved (and hence the cost of both construction and maintenance increased), the Aurora Town Council could then have considered remaining options.

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