

IN GOOD COMPANY: Just the facts

By Mayor Geoff Dawe

Followers of the 1950s crime drama *Dragnet* will doubtlessly note the inspiration of this month's In Good Company article as the famous catch phrase from actor Jack Webb, in his persona of lead character Detective Joe Friday.

Friday had an unswerving knack for simplifying situations with a deadpan and straightforward approach that relied merely on the facts of a case, not the hype and hyperbole such cases often create.

I was reminded of these words repeatedly over the past several weeks as community interest in the Highland Gate redevelopment has intensified, particularly among neighbours of the golf course. I, along with my colleagues on Town Council, have received numerous calls and emails pertaining to the redevelopment application. Some of these messages are for more information. Some are calling for an outright refusal of the proposal. In Friday-esque style, I would like to present just the facts.

Aurora, as with every municipality in Ontario, is governed by multiple pieces of provincial planning legislation. These include the Planning Act, Provincial Policy Statement (2014), Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2006) and the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan. Further to this, the Town has an Official Plan to conform to the province's legislation. Each of these pieces of legislation applies in the Highland Gate redevelopment proposal.

All municipalities have a duty to act within the rules contained in this legislation. They also have an obligation to conduct an open process that is fair to everyone. A Town cannot arbitrarily dismiss an application. There is a formal process to follow, and the Highland Gate proposal is no exception.

The Town has received applications for Official Plan Amendment, Zoning By-law Amendment and a Draft Plan of Subdivision. Town staff is reviewing the technical aspects of these proposals, after which it will be presented to Council for consideration. Council has not considered any aspect of the proposal at this time.

Throughout this process, the Town will encourage public feedback. Council recently approved three public consultations to receive residents' input on the proposal. The first consultation will take place at St. Maximilian Kolbe Catholic High School on Wednesday, June 24 at 6.30 p.m.

I encourage everyone with an interest in this proposal to come out and have their voices heard!

The other consultations are scheduled for September and October.

To help residents better understand the planning process and the redevelopment application, the Town has a dedicated web page at www.aurora.ca/highlandgate. The site will be updated throughout the application and decision-making process.

Another issue that has generated a lot of community discussion is the improvements at the Aurora Family Leisure Complex. To help keep residents apprised of the many upgrades taking place, the Town has a comprehensive list available at www.aurora.ca/AFLCimprovements. This page will also be updated throughout the improvement process.

It has been a very busy season, and another concern brought forward by residents is Canada Post's proposal to locate a number of community mail boxes at locations throughout Town. While the Government of Canada has jurisdiction in this matter, the means by which Canada Post consulted residents fell far short of their stated mandate of "full and meaningful" dialogue.

The City of Hamilton earlier rejected Canada Post's plan for community mailboxes, and Aurora Council has decided to endorse their opposition. While the matter seems destined to be decided in a court, I am hopeful that our actions will persuade the federal government to be more fully inclusive of local concerns in these matters.

Before signing off, I would like to encourage everyone to attend the upcoming Aurora Street Festival, organized by the Aurora Chamber of Commerce. This is a signature event in our community, attended by thousands of people annually. Merchants from across the municipality will be there, offering a myriad of goods and services. Please be sure to stop by the Town's booth for information about the many programs, services and events we offer, and to give your feedback on how you would like to receive Town information

I hope to see you there!