

More work to be done on Centre Street four-plex: Council

Council is calling on residents of Centre Street and the developer of a proposed four-plex within the Heritage Conservation District to work together on a compromise.

That was the decision coming out of last week's General Committee meeting after residents delegated to Council with the backing of their neighbours.

At issue is a plan to demolish a single-family home at 74 Centre Street to make way for a double duplex development.

While residents say they want the property to be redeveloped, having four units ? and potentially six if secondary suites are considered ? on the land was too much and would have an adverse impact on both traffic and the local environment.

Since it was first presented, the developer has worked with municipal staff and the Town's Heritage Advisory Committee to address their concerns, but residents have maintained the changes made to the plan so far do not go far enough ? a message they delivered virtually to lawmakers last week.

Their delegations prompted a motion from Mayor Tom Mrakas ? and supported by Councillors Rachel Gilliland and Sandra Humfries ? to table the issue until September, allowing all parties to work together to find common ground.

?We'll give the opportunity for the applicant to deal with the residents within the community so they can come to an agreement of what should be there and what is appropriate for there and we can deal with it when it comes back to us at that time,? said Mayor Mrakas.

Councillor Humfries agreed that it was ?the right thing to do.?

?It gives the applicant and the residents the opportunity to work together,? she said. ?Everyone has heard [the concerns] loud and clear and I really do believe there will be efforts on both sides to have something proper and good for everyone there.?

In voting in favour of the delay, however, Councillor Wendy Gaertner underscored that the applicant has been cooperative in making the changes suggested by staff and Committee.

?The applicant did everything,? she said. ?I don't remember such a cooperative applicant in my time on the Heritage Committee. I do think we need to, at this point, commend the applicant for doing everything they were asked to do and this isn't a requirement to go out to the neighbourhood [but] in this type of neighbourhood (a Heritage Conservation District) especially, it is a nice thing to do, but I think we have to note and congratulate the applicant for following all the rules.?

Councillor Michael Thompson agreed there is nothing to ?force? the applicant to work with the neighbours, but said he hoped it would be done ?willingly.?

?I look at this situation [as] no different than public planning,? he said. ?It is, for the most part, our tendency when there are concerns expressed by a significant portion of the public we have always pushed back to the applicant and encouraged them to work with the community and their neighbours to address their concerns, obviously in conjunction with staff.?

An additional concern voiced by Councillor Thompson was what the Town could do to ensure this doesn't become a ?six-plex? if basement units are made.

Town Planner David Waters said the Town can ask for an undertaking when the application gets to the building stage ?not to introduce? further units into the building, a request that could also be done as a condition of variance.

?Hopefully when this comes back, those questions have been raised with the applicant and he's provided a response to it so that way we have all the information prior to making any decisions going forward and I am hopeful that a solution will be found, that the residents and neighbours in the area can be supportive of,? said Councillor Thompson. ?I look forward to seeing it in August or September.?

Concluded Mayor Mrakas: ?We need to continue to work really hard to ensure the District Plan is what it was meant to be and it continues to evolve in that way. I hope that the applicant has heard us loud and clear, heard from the residents, and will work with them. When this comes back, hopefully we will have a very favourable outcome that is pleasing for the residents, the applicant, and it is something that fits within the heritage district that we can all be proud to see as it evolves.?

By Brock Weir Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter