

Replaced cell tower will service three providers, but location at issue

By Brock Weir

Rogers, Bell and Telus will join forces on a new 60 metre cell tower in east Aurora, removing and replacing an existing tower near St. John's Sideroad and Bayview Avenue, but some question whether it is the right location.

The plan for the 60 metre tri-pole, a new tower similar in design to the controversial tower in King Township which looms over a neighbourhood on the eastern side of the Bathurst Street boarder, will replace an old-fashioned ladder-style tower in what will soon be the 2C development of thousands of new homes over the next five years.

According to a report before Council by Marco Ramunno, Aurora's Director of Planning, Rogers got the ball rolling on the new tower in late July. The tower will be the same height as the one it is replacing, but relocating the tower will allow for all three companies to piggyback onto the service while improving the esthetics of the current design.

"It will eliminate the need for additional infrastructure for the three wireless service providers," said Mr. Ramunno.

"Understanding there are multiple options in height and size of a telecommunications tower, the applicant proposes a 60 metre in height tri-pole design to accommodate multiple carriers on one tower. The tower will be incorporated into the commercial block within the approved draft plan of the subdivision for TACC Developments."

A public meeting last month was unattended.

"I know there are no houses out there, so there isn't the same impact of implementing a cell tower there as there have been in some other areas of Town," said Mayor Geoffrey Dawe at last week's General Committee meeting, before asking about the possibilities of moving the tower further to a corner of St. John's Sideroad and Leslie Street that would otherwise be unoccupied.

"I don't know if that is possible, but it would perhaps be an opportunity there to do some natural buffering as opposed to having it beside houses," he said.

Aurora's planning department mentioned alternative locations but, after a review, Rogers decided against it, said Mr. Ramunno, noting a higher elevation is needed and the spot Mayor Dawe had in mind might be too low.

"They have looked at alternative locations within this parcel that is currently owned by TACC, but they have determined this is the most appropriate location to provide that continuous cell coverage in this location."

Councillor Michael Thompson also said he had concerns with the options before Council, and said he wasn't convinced yet that all was in order.

"While I am sure Rogers has done their due diligence and they have come to the conclusion that this is the best location, I would have liked to have seen if they can't use a flagpole construction like is being considered for the Longo's plaza," he said. "I would have liked to have seen more data that this is the only location it could be placed. I would have liked to have seen more to say it couldn't be placed north of the subdivision, so I could be confident I have done that due diligence."

"I have not seen that raw data to make me feel comfortable."

Despite some questions about locations, Councillors said they were encouraged that this new tower could eliminate the possibility of two further individual towers being needed in the area. Nevertheless, Council wanted to make sure every detail was covered with this tower to make sure it is the best option for Aurora and, particularly, the neighbourhood that is going to spring up around it while avoiding the problems that swirled around the King tower.

?This Council is once bit, twice shy,? said Councillor John Abel. ?We want to make sure that we let the residents know that given the opportunity we would act on their behalf and in their best interests. We have to have a communication tower and nothing is going to change that. This Council took a lot of heat.?

Added Councillor John Gallo: ?If we were to consider moving it to that corner?I am okay with exploring any options, but if you're going to do it, this is the best time to do it.?