

Second meeting to be set over Longo's cell tower

By Brock Weir

Aurora residents will soon have a second chance to sound off on a proposed new cell phone tower slated for the northwest corner of the Longo's plaza at Bayview and Wellington.

As The Auroran went to press on Tuesday, Altus Group, consultants retained by Bell Canada over the tower, were due to meet with area residents at the Aurora Public Library to hear their thoughts. What's at stake is a 29.9 metre flagpole style telecommunications tower, complete with an equipment shelter and perimeter fencing just metres between the grocery store and the residential development branching out from John West Way.

While the consultants were required to send notices of the public meeting to everyone within a certain degree of the area in question, some neighbours were missed in the process, according to Alexandra Schaffhauser of Altus.

?We had missed a few residents on the notification document that went out, and so we're going to be sending out another notice to those residents who were missed in the initial mail-out noting a second meeting will be set up for them.?

A date for a second meeting has not yet been pinned down.

According to Marco Ramunno, Director of Planning for the Town of Aurora, the company was required to notify residents within a 120 metre radius of the proposed site, but some of the condominium town homes nearby received notification from their own condo corporation rather than Bell's consultants themselves. He advised the consultants they needed to provide residents directly with 30 days' notice of a public meeting.

For some Councillors, a second meeting was welcome news.

?I am glad that if they have missed some people, or some people feel they have been missed that they're responsible enough to hold a second meeting to make sure that everybody is included,? said Councillor Chris Ballard.

The issue hits close to home for Councillor John Gallo. Councillor Gallo said when considering this cell tower proposal, he is ?struggling? to reconcile the fact Health Canada says there is no significant health issue with these towers, contrary to other studies in the public domain.

?We need to do our due diligence. I am not in favour of just saying, ?No, get rid of it. Don't put it there.' If the opinion is we need to put it somewhere else, then where and how? Would we be moving the problem somewhere else and having the other residents deal with it? That is not fair either. It shouldn't be a NIMBY-ism kind of thing. We need to figure it out.?

A cell tower just behind the plaza might be the best place for it and, in that event, there is no use fighting it, he added, noting he would wait to see how the studies and consultation shook down. This time around, however, looking back to the Town of Aurora's recent battle with Bell Canada over the cell phone tower on the King side of Bathurst Street, he says he's hopeful Aurora will have more of an impact, but he was ?somewhat skeptical? as to how much.

?No matter what we say, they may be willing to do a little bit but the issues are higher up in the upper level government than what we can do on this level,? he said. ?I am not sure how much they will listen to us.?

Once both public meetings are concluded, the next step is for the information and feedback to be compiled and sent to the Town for Mr. Ramunno's review. Once that is done, a report will be sent to Council for the tower's approval.

?I want to be able to identify to Council whether they have, obviously, fulfilled the public consultation requirements to Industry

Canada's protocol and our protocol as well.?