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URA Member Meeting Minutes
February 01, 2016
Stiver Mill

URA Directors:

Peter Miasek, Alick Siu, Gene Genin, Keing Li, Tom Davies, Karen Lui
Regrets: Kanthini Rajakanthan, Adam Poon, Donna Day & Reid McAlpine

Elected Officials:

Councillors: Don Hamilton (Ward 3)

Guests:

Lorenzo Catuzza, Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation

Attendance: Approximately 25 members and guests

1. President's Introduction

The meeting was called to order by URA President, Alick Siu, at 7:15 PM. Alick welcomed members, elected officials and special guests. Peter Miasek chaired the meeting.

2. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

Members reviewed the January 18, 2016 meeting minutes. A minor revision was requested.

Motion: That the January 18 meeting report be approved with minor revisions.

Moved by: Geoff Pyne

Seconded by: Bev Deacon

Motion Carried.

3. Treasurer's Report

No Report was presented at the meeting.

4. Membership Report

No Report was presented at the meeting.

5. Committee Reports & Focus Topics

5.1 New Zoning By-law Project

Since the City of Markham is undertaking a comprehensive review of its zoning by-laws and zoning framework, URA President Alick Siu will be inviting the city's senior planner to provide an update at the March URA meeting. With enough member interest a working group will be started since in light of the pending York University campus, by-laws governing rooming houses are of particular concern.

5.2 York University Campus Development

Alick advised that at last week's Council meeting completion date for the campus of 2020 was presented. Starting with 1,000 students, the plan includes adding about 1,000 new students every year to maximum of 4,000 students by 2023. Phase 1 design work will start as early as April 2016.

5.3 Tree Preservation

Peter provided an update on the discussions with City planners concerning the extensive loss of trees resulting from the Varley development. City planners acknowledged that the process was problematic since off-site trees were not identified as being at risk until late in the approval process. The City does have guidelines to preserve trees and takes preservation seriously. In the Varley situation, the City planners did say that the developer confirmed negotiating agreements with affected property owners – three in this case. Whether all property owners with affected trees were involved and the outcome of any agreements are not known.

5.3 GO Train Horn Cessation

Peter advised that in their January 25th update to City Council, engineering staff confirmed that whistle cessation is scheduled for competition across the entire urban part of Markham by the summer of 2018.

5.4 URA Transportation Sub-Committee

As chair of the URA Transportation Sub-Committee, Peter reviewed the top 20 mobility challenges and issues facing Markham. The role of the sub-committee is to develop formal positions on transportation issues and to engage the relevant levels of government in resolution. To date, seven members have joined the sub-committee, but more are welcome.

5.5 Main Street Vision Plan

URA member, Harry Eaglesham, noted that the City is concerned about the lack of applicants for the Main St. Vision Plan Steering Committee and encouraged URA members to participate. Reid McAlpine is the URA representative on the steering committee.

6. Council Updates

Councillor Don Hamilton confirmed approval of the Varley Plaza demolition permit. North-bound construction traffic from Highway 7 will be routed up Eureka Street. South-bound traffic, leaving the site for Highway 7, will be routed down Main Street. Construction site staff parking will be at the Stiver Mill Market area.

Councillor Hamilton also advised that the assessment of Uber's impact on City taxi regulations has been deferred. A new timeline for revisiting taxi regulations was not available.

Another urgent issue on City Council's agenda is the use of rental homes to host weekend parties. With Internet sites like Airbnb greatly simplifying the renting of a house by the day there have been a couple of cases of rented homes hosting very disruptive parties. Unfortunately, at this time, there are no by-laws in place to regulate rowdy parties held in short term rental homes.

7. New Business

None.

8. Next Meeting

The next URA meeting is scheduled for 7:00 PM, Monday March 7, 2016. Location is to be determined.

9. Meeting Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 7:50PM

10. Guest Speakers

Lorenzo Catuzza – Director, York Region, Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation presented an extensive update on the recently released Crombie Report – a 10-year review of the Greenbelt Act and the provincial “Places to Grow” intensification plan.

A highlight of the report’s 87 recommendations is the addition of a nearly two million acre “Bluebelt” of permanently protected farmland, forests and water systems. This proposed Greenbelt growth is to safeguard southern Ontario’s sources of clean drinking water and mitigate the effects of climate change.