



Public has its say on 26/27 SR project

By Trina Berlo Posted May 10, 2019 in News

Almost two hours into a meeting about proposed upgrades to the 26/27 Sideroad, some people were urging others to accept that County Road 91 would close and that upgrades to the side road were inevitable.

Clearview council chambers were overflowing Wednesday with concerned citizens who, for the first time, were invited to an information session, presentation and open mic about the reconstruction of the 26/27 Sideroad. Although not part of an application to amend the Niagara Escarpment Plan (NEP) to allow for the reconstruction, the closure of County Road 91 was at the heart of the matter. Some in attendance seemed tired of the lengthy process that resulted in a Road Settlement after a tribunal was held for the Duntroon quarry expansion, which has been on the books for more than a decade.

"99.9 per cent of us in this room are hoping for a miracle that 91 would stay open," said Mike Selby, adding that there is a general sense of betrayal because of the way the deal was done and a lack of trust that the road reconstruction would be done right. "But let's put this to rest and move on," he said.

Walker Aggregates started hauling on the former County Road 91 from the expanded quarry and is now shipping down the improved road, which has been downloaded to the township. It was thought the road closure wouldn't happen until the upgrades to 26/27 Sideroad and Concession 10 are complete but then the Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC) denied Clearview a development permit to reconstruct 26/27 Sideroad from the 10th Concession to Grey Road 31.

Wednesday's public meeting was about a separate process – an application to amend the NEP to allow for other road works after wetlands were identified in the area.

NEC senior strategic advisor Nancy Mott said she doesn't know how long the process would take saying in this "age of constraint" the NEC is meeting less frequently.

Consultant Michael Wynia, of Skelton Brumwell and Associates, spoke to the details of the NEP amendment. Clearview is seeking permission to bring the 26/27 Sideroad, which is partially a seasonal road, up to municipal standard by widening, reinforcing and paving the road. It and Concession 10 would become an alternate route, when and if a portion of County Road 91 is stopped up and transferred to Walker Aggregates.

Wynia explained that the whole plan was initiated by the County of Simcoe who wanted to download the road when it became apparent how many upgrades would be necessary to accommodate the aggregate. So the process of transferring the road to Walker, who has already done the necessary improvements, began.

There has been a lot of opposition to the proposed closure of County Road 91, at least half of those filling council chambers Wednesday were Grey-Highlands residents (as demonstrated by a show of hands at the request of CAO Steve Sage).

There were also a number of County Road 91 residents who said they can't wait for the quarry portion of their road to be closed because the traffic is a big concern. They say the number of regular vehicles, mixed with gravel trucks, makes for a very dangerous situation.

Wynia said 26/27 Sideroad has become a liability for the township and it must either be upgraded or closed permanently – which is not an option because people use it to access their properties. Others just weren't buying claims that upgrading 26/27 Sideroad would be safer for those already using the road and would improve fish habitat in the stream at the base of the road.

One woman who rose to comment said the NEP amendment was not in the public interest. "This is a decision based on business. This is about aggregate," she said. "You are not going to improve anything by paving it over and that's what you are going to do."

In response to Dick Corner's question as to who is going to pay for all this? Sage said of the \$10.5 million in transfer funds from Walker Aggregates and the County, \$6 million was spent on improving 91, including a \$2 million bridge. Assuming the rest of the work can be done for \$4.5 million, there is still \$3.5 million left from the development agreement but Gas Tax revenue and taxpayer dollars will have to make up the shortfall.

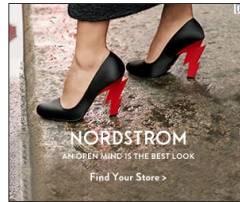
All of the documents relating to the NEP amendment can be viewed at the Niagara Escarpment Commission office in Thornbury. Comments are being accepted until the end of May. For more information, or to provide comment, contact nancy.mott@ontario.ca or 905-877-8363.

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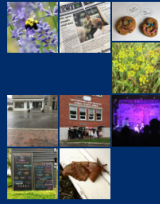
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