

Good evening Mayor Henderson, Deputy Mayor Seguin, and Councillors.

My name is Dennis Nabieszko and I live on Hudson Street in Cobourg. I am here as a private citizen and not as part of any organization.

The Director of Planning has outlined in his report various options for Council to consider and vote on. I am here to identify the options that I recommend you adopt.

I appreciate the efforts of the Director of Planning and his department in researching and presenting the information to assist Council in improving what is sometimes a very emotional and stressful process for citizens.

What citizens want when they come before Council is to know what they say matters. Too many times, they feel as if what they have to say does not matter.

Currently, citizens are asked to come forward and provide their feedback in a public meeting where after all the planning work has been done, the report has been prepared with recommendations, and Council have already considered the report and recommendations. The next step is that Council listens to citizens and immediately afterwards, Council votes. There is no time taken to consider what citizens had to say. Just as you take the time to consider what the planning department has written in their report, I urge Council to really listen and then take the time to consider what citizens have said.

Let me briefly review the options.

For option one on sign postings. Currently, a sign posting is done only at the site plan approval stage but there is no statutory requirement in the Planning Act. The process is designed to be a technical exercise and so is of little use to the public. A sign should be posted to let the public know as soon as possible that there is a zoning change under consideration and to provide them with the information about public meetings and where to go to get more information.

For option two on public open houses. Citizens want to know what is happening in their neighbourhood. They should not have to go seeking out this information. There should be a mandatory requirement for all applicants that they hold a public open house within 30 to 45 days of formal receipt of the application by Council. The applicant would be required to submit a written summary report of the open house to the Town and included in the report to Council.

Missing from this option is how the applicant is required to notify the public. I suggest as a minimum having the applicant notify all owners within 120 meters of the subject area of the public open house. The option one suggestion for sign posting could also be applied here.

Council can decide at the formal receipt of the application whether to exempt an application from a public open house.

The more citizens are informed and understand what is happening, the less likely they are to be misinformed and anxious about what is happening in their neighbourhood.

This should be a mandatory requirement for all applicants.

For options 3 and 4. The use of Radio Ads & TV Message Boards for special planning and development projects that affect the broader community should be implemented as outlined in the Director's recommendation.

For option five. With regards to whether to have the Planning Department issue their opinion and recommendations before or after the public meeting, the requirement should be to issue them **after** the public meeting. The quote from the Director's report on the public meeting procedure says:

“Cobourg’s Statutory Planning Public Meeting procedure is...to provide the public with an opportunity to make representation, ask questions and provide input, orally and/or in writing, to Council for their consideration prior to making a decision.”

I would add that it is also for the benefit of the planning department to hear what the public have to say before preparing their recommendations. This allows the planning staff to consider the public input in their recommendations and to summarize the public input in their report for Council to review. It also gives Council time to consider what citizens had to say.

Missing from this review process are the advisory committees. Although most zoning changes may not be applicable to the committees' mandate, the advisory committees should be given the opportunity to review these zoning changes and offer their recommendations to Council, where appropriate.

For option 6. Having the statutory public meeting no later than 30 days before the end of the respective Planning Act requirement should be implemented as outlined.

In conclusion, citizens need to be informed as early as possible, have confidence that they have been heard, and that their feedback has been taken into consideration. Without these, there is no trust in the public engagement process.

Thank you

Recommendation Summary

- Option 1 – Sign Posting of the public meeting and the public open house in addition to existing notification methods.
- Option 2 – Public Open House for all applications and a written summary report on the open house provided to the Town.
- Options 3/4 – Radio Ads & TV Message Boards for special planning and development projects that affect the broader community.
- Option 5 - Planning opinion report and recommendations after the Statutory Public Meeting. Advisory Committees required to submit their recommendations.
- Option 6 - Convene the Statutory Public Meeting no later than 30 days before the end of the respective Planning Act timelines.