

PERTH COUNTY COUNCIL
Minutes of Public Meeting under the Planning Act

August 12, 2009
7:30 p.m.

Warden Julie Behrns, summoned the members of County Council and conducted the roll call.

All members of County Council present except Councillor Van Bakel.

Staff in attendance:

Dave Hanly, Director of Planning and Development, Geoff VanderBaaren, Planner Carol Zimmer, Deputy Clerk, Taralyn Martin, Dave Verbeek, Mike Mitchell, Planning Department students.

No disclosure of pecuniary interest was declared.

Purpose of meeting:

To deal with a proposal to change the existing Official Plan policies dealing with the severance of surplus farm dwellings. The proposal has been initiated by the County of Perth in response to concerns expressed by some of the local municipal Councils in the County.

It is proposed to change the existing policy so surplus farm house severances would be allowed in the Municipality of West Perth and Township of Perth South. The policy not allowing surplus farm house severances would remain unchanged in the Municipality of North Perth and Township of Perth East.

Resolution: 2009-389

Moved by Councillor Wilhelm

Seconded by Councillor Seiler

That Perth County Council adjourns to a Public Meeting to hear comments regarding the proposed changes to the surplus farm policies in the Perth County Official Plan.

Carried

The notice of public meeting was given on July 1, 2009 for a July 22, 2009 meeting. As the notice was not complete, the meeting was rescheduled to August 12, 2009. Notice for the rescheduled meeting was mailed on July 20, 2009 and placed in newspapers (Listowel Banner, Stratford Beacon Herald, St. Marys Journal Argus, Mitchell Banner, Shoppportunity) on July 15, 2009.

August 12, 2009

Page 2 of 4

Correspondence was received and reviewed from Dan Schneider, Anthony Boersen, Municipality of North Perth and Perth Federation of Agriculture.

Comments from the audience:

Mr. Brent Shackleton spoke in support of the change to allow surplus farm house severances. Land uses have changed over the years and agreed with the 3 year time limit to own the property and no dwelling on the remnant parcel. Large farm operations do not have the time to maintain surplus dwellings. The changes will not take away farm land, lead to new development or restrict livestock. Farm practice issues could be dealt with by inserting acknowledgment clause in deeds. Often tenants only remain in homes a short time but owners would be long term and take pride in the property. Heritage buildings should be preserved. It was confirmed by Mr. Hanly that the farm property that the dwelling is severed from would be effected.

Mr. Jim Nicholson spoke in support of the change to allow surplus farm house severances. As assessment and population is declining and schools are closing. Five houses have recently been torn down in his area. "People are more important than things"

Ms. Liz Armstrong spoke in support of the change to allow surplus farm house severances. Population is on the decrease and schools are closing. Several surrounding municipalities are allowing, tax dollars and heritage will be retained. Purchasers of severed dwellings as often people with farm backgrounds wishing to remain in the community.

Mr. Jack DeGroot spoke in opposition to the proposed change stating that it is not cheaper to live in the country, population is decreasing because families are not as large as they used to be, farm practices create odours and good agricultural land should be maintained.

Mr. Paul Bald spoke in opposition to the proposed change stating poor planning to have residential use mixed with agricultural use. The policy should be consistent throughout the County and the tax base should be increased by development the urban areas. It is often the people residing in the dwellings and not the dwellings themselves that create the problems.

Mr. Jamie Beaumont stated tenants in surplus dwellings can be difficult and often they are the ones that sue the municipality regarding road conditions. Houses are expensive to maintain.

Mr. Brent Royce spoke on behalf of the Perth Federation of Agriculture. The policies need to be consistent throughout the County and the Federation supports the existing

August 12, 2009

Page 3 of 4

policies. The Federation supports the non farm uses being prohibited because of restrictions to agriculture.

Ms. Angela Weber supported the changes as it gives people living in the dwellings an opportunity to live in and learn about the rural community. These are existing dwellings. The declining population, causing schools to close, will lead to long bus rides for children. Complaints concerning poor farm practices often come from other farmers and not surplus farm house tenants.

Mr. Mert Schneider owns several properties with surplus dwellings and wouldn't sever any of them.

Mr. Bert Vorstenbosch Jr stated concerns with 'Once a severance, always a severance' under the Planning Act. There should be a mechanism in place to re-unite a severed surplus farm house with the farm parcel. There should be policies put in place that would allow farmers to be reimbursed legal fees against frivolous complaints to Normal Farm Practices Board. The 3 year period for owning the property is irrelevant as often the dwelling is often in poor condition within that time limit.

Ms. Erika Keistra opposed the changes as building on the remnant parcel will be restricted.

Mr. Bill Miller stated that the changes would lead to increased complaints from non-farm residents, growth restrictions on existing farm properties and complaints on manure management. Many of the surplus homes would not be considered heritage homes.

Ms. Karen Kelly stated that owners of severed surplus farm dwellings would take pride in their property. There is history and culture in the older homes. The policy deals with existing homes, if you develop Sebringville, you will lose farm lands. She agreed that farmers should be awarded legal costs on frivolous complaints regarding Normal Farm Practices.

Mr. Hanly confirmed that any policy regarding reimbursement of legal fees is outside of the County Official Plan and Farm Practice Committee and would be governed by the Province.

Joel Ceresne, who has lived in a rural dwelling for 20 years, supported the change as surplus farm dwelling owners would support local construction trades and farm product operations.

Gerry Wallis supports the changes as many surplus dwellings are being torn down. Residential uses are declining in rural areas. Owners of severed dwellings would spend

