

**Minutes of the Town of Ajax
Community Affairs & Planning Committee Meeting
Held in the Council Chambers, Ajax Town Hall,
at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, May 17, 2010**

Present: Regional Councillor S. Crawford, Chair
 Mayor S. Parish
 Councillor S. Collier
 Councillor R. Ashby
 Councillor J. Dies
 Councillor P. Brown

Regrets: Regional Councillor C. Jordan

1. Call to Order (7:00 p.m.)

Chair Crawford called the meeting to order.

2. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest

None

3. Adoption of Minutes

3.1 Minutes

Moved by: S. Collier
Seconded by: R. Ashby

That the Minutes of the Community Affairs and Planning Committee Meeting held on May 3, 2010 be adopted.

CARRIED

4. Public Meetings

4.1 Proposal for New Bingo Hall in Ajax

Mr. D. Hannan, Manager By-law Services, provided an overview of the staff report in the meeting agenda. He noted several factors that adversely affected the popularity and profitability of bingo gaming, which contributed to the closure and consolidation of halls across the province. He discussed the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario's (AGCO) new revenue model and improvements that have contributed to the protection a viability of bingo operations, such as revised maximum prize board payouts.

Mr. Hannan noted that staff had been approached by Mr. Binod Singh and Mr. Jerry Wettlaufer of Hideaway Bingo – Whitby, to discuss potential relocation of their existing bingo operation to the Town of Ajax. He advised that the AGCO requires the approval of municipal Council in

order to approve opening of the new hall. Mr. Hannan reviewed the proposal to Open a New Bingo Hall received by the Town Clerk from Mr. Singh. He discussed details relative to zoning requirements, certificate of registration, a map of existing halls located within 30 km of the proposed Ajax location, description of hall operations, background information of the applicant as well as details of the proposed facility location, as included in the meeting agenda. Mr. Hannan also reviewed By-law #40-2001 and discussed projected revenues based on the proposed schedule of bingo events submitted by the applicant.

Receipt of several letters of objection to the proposal from various organizations, charities and community service clubs were noted. The main reason for opposition was identified as the potential loss of charitable revenue, should the Ajax hall be approved. Mr. Hannan advised the Committee of several criteria to be evaluated by the Town during consideration of the proposal. He advised that no consideration should be given to the proposal's affect on the bingo industry at large within the Durham Region. He also advised of the appeals process to the AGCO should the proposal be supported by the Town. He concluded by noting staff's recommendation to approve the proposal based on the potential benefit to charities, local businesses and bingo players within the Town of Ajax.

The Committee posed several questions regarding outstanding planning issues, by-law implications, and municipal financial responsibility. Staff advised that the proposed facility location was pre-approved and that no outstanding issues were identified. The Committee requested clarification on the appeals process. Staff also advised of enforcement responsibilities between the AGCO and municipality. It was noted that the Municipal Licencing Officer maintains regular monitoring presence and interaction with the hall owner and charities.

Chair Crawford acknowledged receipt of a petition of opposition distributed to the Committee separately from the meeting agenda. Staff advised that the petition would be of interest to the AGCO should an appeal be filed. It was noted that all parties who submitted correspondence relative to the proposal would be notified of Council's approval. The Committee inquired whether participation of charities was exclusive to one hall at a time. Staff advised that charities have the right to operate in multiple hall locations.

Chair Crawford declared the meeting to be a public meeting and invited comments.

Ms. Linda Mair, President Mayfair Bingo (Pickering) Association, expressed opposition to the approval of opening a new bingo hall in Ajax. She noted that the proposed location for the Ajax hall is 4.1 km from the Delta Bingo Hall in Pickering, which has a capacity of 600 people.

Mr. Franck Sobil, Red Barn Auditorium - Oshawa, stated his opposition to the proposed relocation of Hideaway Bingo. He noted poor attendance at Ajax's former bingo hall prior to its closure. He expressed concern for potential losses to participating charities and the potential for decreased revenue.

The Committee requires clarification regarding Mr. Sobil's suggestion that the municipality provide financial bonding to cover prize payout shortfalls. Mr. Sobil noted that bingo bonds are not currently provided by Oshawa or Pickering. Staff advised that all proposed prize board require the approval of the AGCO to ensure reasonable balance between attendance and prizes.

Ms. Mary Anderson, bingo player, stated her support for the proposed relocation of Hideaway Bingo to Ajax. She noted that since the closure of the Whitby Hall, residents found it difficult to travel to the Oshawa hall. She advised that Ajax would be a more convenient location to travel to and that she is in support of the smaller gaming environment.

Mr. Cameron Johnstone, owner Delta Bingo Pickering, identified declining presence of bingo halls across the province. He noted that closure of the Ajax bingo hall was a result of insufficient support for two bingo halls between Ajax and Pickering municipalities, and was also affected by market consolidation and the development of Ontario Lottery Gaming slots at Ajax Downs. He expressed his opposition towards the proposal due to the potential negative financial impact on Ajax charities and existing bingo halls. He noted his intent to appeal to the AGCO should Council approve the proposal. Mr. Johnstone discussed various financial records and projections as included in a document distributed separately from the meeting agenda.

Ms. Kim Dowds presented several comments for the Committee's consideration. She noted significant decreases in charitable bingo revenue experienced during her time working for the March of Dimes. She expressed several concerns relative to accessibility accommodations, parking and curb cuts, as well as for potential traffic congestion increase. Completion of a traffic analysis was proposed should the proposal be approved. Ms. Dowds also identified concerns with increased presence of smokers outside the facility and the affect on neighbouring organizations, such as Grandview Children's Centre.

The Committee raised questions relative to the accessibility accommodations presented by Ms. Dowds. Staff advised that the location is fully compliant with municipal requirements and that should the proposal be approved, discussion with the property owner relative to further improvements would occur.

Ms. Carol Burgess, Delta Bingo Volunteer on behalf of ALS Society of Durham, stated her opposition to the proposal and expressed concern for potential decrease in charitable revenue with the opening of an Ajax hall.

Mr. Dave Conway, Hideaway Bingo Charities Association, noted Hideaway's objective to offer smaller, more affordable bingo gaming in an entertaining location. He identified that the target audience of Hideaway Bingo to be different than that of larger neighboring bingo hall competitors. He expressed his support for the relocation of the hall to Ajax.

Mr. David Bicknell, Ajax Knights of Columbus, discussed the financial difficulty experienced by his organization during the closure of the Ajax hall. He noted that since joining Delta Bingo, the Knights of Columbus have had a very profitable experience. He stated his opposition to the proposal with concern that an Ajax bingo hall could dilute proceeds of existing charities with the community.

As no further comments were received, Chair Crawford closed the public meeting.

Mr. Binod Singh, owner of Hideaway Bingo, provided background information relative to the closure and relocation of Hideaway Bingo in Whitby. He discussed details relative to his proposal included in the meeting agenda and expressed his intent to invest in Ajax and provide fundraising opportunities to community charities not currently aware or participating in Bingo gaming. Mr. Singh committed to working with Town staff to ensure necessary changes, such as those that may be required to improve accessibility, would be reviewed.

Councillors Brown, Dies, and Ashby spoke in favour of the motion and staff's recommendation to approve the proposal as it will be of potential benefit to the local businesses, charities and residents of Ajax.

Moved by: P. Brown
Seconded by: S. Parish

That the proposal from Hideaway Bingo to open a new Bingo Hall in the town of Ajax be approved.

CARRIED

Note: The following recommendation was approved at the June 14, 2010 Council meeting with respect to this matter.

May 17, 2010 Community Affairs and Planning Committee Report

Moved by: S. Crawford
Seconded by: P. Brown

That item 4.1 in the Community Affairs and Planning Committee Report dated May 17, 2010 be separated; and,

That the balance of the May 17, 2010 Community Affairs and Planning Committee Report be approved.
CARRIED

May 17, 2010 Community Affairs and Planning Committee Report, Item 4.1

Moved by: J. Dies
Seconded by: C. Jordan

That the recommendation to approve a proposal from Hideaway Bingo to open a new Bingo Hall in the Town of Ajax as it appears in the May 17, 2010 Community Affairs & Planning Committee Report as Item 4.1 be rejected, without prejudice, due to the proponents failure to post adequate public notice pursuant to the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario's (AGCO) criteria.

CARRIED

5. Presentations

None

6. Reports

None

7. Adjournment (8:30 p.m.)

Moved by: J. Dies
Seconded by: P. Brown

That the May 17, 2010 meeting of the Community Affairs and Planning Committee be adjourned.

CARRIED

S. Crawford, Chair

