

Pilon, Janet

Subject: Planning Committee meeting July 10 - complaint lodged against Councillor Ferguson

From: Janice Currie

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Subject: Planning Committee meeting July 10 - complaint lodged against Councillor Ferguson

I am given to understand that, at the July 10 Planning Committee meeting, Councillor Green referenced a letter of complaint against Councillor Ferguson received from Mr. Andrew Spoelstra, Chair of the Agriculture and Rural Affairs committee.

I believe the complaint concerned perceived 'lies' told by Councillor Ferguson about Mr. Spoelstra's conduct at an Agriculture and Rural Affairs Advisory Committee meeting held on February 26 of this year. Mr. Spoelstra made similar accusations at an Ag. and Rural Affairs meeting on June 21, which I attended.

I was at the February 26 meeting and would like to present my side of the story:

Residents of the Carluke community were becoming increasingly concerned about the rumored, large, Gro-op facility being planned for 240 Butter Road. We didn't know how, or where, to get information.

We were told that the Clerk's department had arranged a Special Agriculture and Rural Affairs committee meeting for February 26. Sure enough, when searching online we found the agenda with two Gro-op delegations registered to speak. Several of us arranged to deliver flyers throughout the neighbourhood and, in the end, about 75 residents attended.

Mr. Spoelstra may feel as if we hijacked his meeting, but he didn't handle it well. The stated mandate of the Ag. and Rural Affairs committee is to "represent the interests of Hamilton's agricultural industry, farm families and non-farm rural residents". Presumably this means ALL residents - including the 75 unexpected ones who attend a meeting.

We are not politicians, or lobbyists, or lawyers, and have no reason to be familiar with committee rules or protocols such as registering to speak as delegates, or asking questions 'through the Chair'. We are local residents who wanted to be included in the conversation and get some answers.

On the day following the meeting, I sent Councillor Ferguson the following email "... I am, of course, hugely disappointed, but also deeply offended at the tone and outcome of the meeting last night. The Chair deliberately misled the public audience by stating that, following the break, the committee would be dealing with 'other' business. In fact, there was no other business and he was merely trying to avoid public dissent on the motion. He should be censured".

I reinforced those sentiments when I spoke before the Planning Committee on June 19. Those comments are a matter of public record, as I provided a printed copy to the Clerk. In brief, I

stated "we didn't get many answers (at the February 26 meeting). Instead, we were treated as a nuisance and rebuked frequently for asking questions specific to the marijuana facility being proposed We were also prompted to leave the meeting without the opportunity of hearing their motion".

If Councillor Ferguson made any complaint about the February 26 meeting it was because I, and others, complained to him.

I trust you will take my comments under advisement and reconsider your proposal to tell Mr. Spoelstra what a 'great job he's doing'. He may well be doing a great job, but February 26 was not the best example.

Janice Currie

Sent from my iPad