

From: Grant Ranalli <
Sent: July 31, 2021 11:59 PM
To: clerk@hamilton.ca
Subject: Sprawl and Offsetting

To the City Clerk,
For your information and for the record,
I am copying you on a letter to Counsellor Ferguson that I just emailed.

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Dear Councillor Ferguson,

I wish to register my very strong opposition to two ideas of critical importance:

1. Boundary expansion and
2. Offsetting.

1. Boundary expansion -

I believe that there should be absolutely **no more boundary expansion for the City of Hamilton.**

In other words, **I support Option 2 - No Boundary Expansion.**

Why?

Am I an extreme leftist?

Am I speaking as part of a 'No Sprawl' group?

Nope, just an average, tax-paying citizen who cares deeply about our City, our Province, our country and about future generations. If you have children, and grandchildren, maybe you should too.

Is this, to quote you, 'An aggressive push by environmentalists'? (Ancaster News July 25/21)
No more than the aggressive push by monied home builders who constantly lobby and take out full page ads in the local newspaper to browbeat the public into acquiescing to their demands for more.

If this is not the definition of a 'special interest group', I don't know what is.

Your own ad may be characterized as 'fear mongering' and this is backed by some facts.

First, the Provincial government is using some 'slight-of-hand' by looking forward with population projections that are 30 years down the road - vs the usual 20 year 'look ahead'. This is disingenuous and downright sneaky.

Second, almost all population projections are wrong and in fact the previous ones overestimated population growth by up to 100% so relying on those numbers is, in effect, using erroneous data to make very important decisions that will have long term (possibly negative) consequences.

The frequent use of MZO's (Ministerial Zoning Orders), should have raised red flags about the Provincial government's contempt for local government. So as a councillor for our City (i.e. local government) shouldn't you be defending our voices instead of being complicit in this diminishing of our democratic agency?

I am not anti business or anti-development. In fact I would love to see lots of transit oriented development to accompany the proposed LRT lines. As well, there are huge development opportunities to engage in infill or to build the 'missing middle' - that is, townhomes, apartments and 4-6 story residential buildings on PLENTY of vacant, under-utilized land within the present City boundaries. All services and ready to go with a Tlmmies, library, fire station and grocery store down the street.

So let the builders work on these projects. Maybe the builders will have to be creative and use their imaginations a bit more and maybe their profit margins will be a little smaller than building single family dwellings. So what?
I don't see any builders living hand to mouth or driving old cars. Quite the opposite in fact.

But no, they want what they want and will use bogus data and throw money on expensive ads to get their way.
And you, Councillor Ferguson, appear to be doing their bidding. May I ask, 'Why?'.

There are many things at stake and those pushing for the environment don't have the deep pockets that developers do to try to buy their way free.
My question: How much money is enough?

Lest you think I am just 'jumping on the bandwagon' or am 'late to the party' with my concerns, think again.

As you may recall from my past dealing with City Hall and letters to the editor, that I have been a firm believer in environmental action - from the promotion of a pesticide by-law (passed), to pushing for green bins to be employed in Catholic schools (accepted), as spokesperson for Hamilton Waterwatch - advocating for the end of privatized water and waste water services in Hamilton (done), to the push for an anti-idling by-law (passed) and to the promotion of more cycling infrastructure in schools and in the City generally (still happening).

These are all things that have and will make Hamilton truly a 'better place to raise a child'. And if it is good for children, it is good for aging baby boomers. It should be the best place to raise a child from one to ninety two
(as the song goes).

These are REAL actions, not just platitudes and sloganeering or 'greenwashing' - a favourite ploy by some corporations or public figures.

As you well know by now, expanding the boundary will create more infrastructure which first has to be built (and we all know development costs are often deeply discounted by the City). Then infrastructure has to be maintained. That means annual upkeep of even more roads, street lights, traffic lights, sidewalks, water, sewer, transit, fire service, libraries etc.

Does a city with a huge infrastructure deficit really need further expenses that will put us all in a deeper hole?

Revenue generation from property taxes are much higher with 'missing middle' buildings than from single-family dwellings on prime, Class One farmland – of which there is very little left in Ontario.

Finally, with expansion, there will be more commuting which is another blow against nature and will not mitigate the effects of climate change. And if you have watched the news lately, climate change, believe it or not, is happening faster and more dramatically than ever predicted. Costs associated with the damage fires, floods and soaring temperatures have caused are astronomical, but the cost of doing nothing is no longer an option.

A survey was put out by the City but an article in the Spec criticized it for poor methodology. I agreed. It was sloppy and half-baked, but then, many people thought 'the fix was in' because the original proposal by staff did not even give a 'no sprawl' option. The term 'stacked deck' comes immediately to mind. The City did not even make a pretence to listening to other, non-sprawl options. Nevertheless, the many people who did respond to the survey opted for the 'No sprawl' option and these votes should not be discounted.

2. Offsetting = Upsetting

The entire concept of 'offsetting' or physically moving a wetland or other significant feature is ludicrous.

Wetlands, waterfalls or creeks that have taken millennia to form (yes, since the last ice age, not since the last election) should not be moved or 'offset' ('offset' is very poor euphemisms for destruction) so some company can build a warehouse.

Yes, you read that right. A WAREHOUSE. We are so blessed with an abundance of nature in our area. I've taken my nieces and nephews to marvel at waterfalls, creeks, forests, ponds and fields.

I have yet to take them to marvel at a warehouse.

Why I ask, does it have to be built smack in the middle of a sensitive wetland when there are acres and acres of land that are not nearly as significant? (within the City boundary of course).

So Counsellor Ferguson, if it appears to you that environmentalists are a bit pushy or aggressive, they have good reason to be and I for one, won't apologize for acting on behalf of my (and your) nieces and nephews and for those not yet born.

We are advocating for a cleaner, greener, more sustainable Earth for our children and our grandchildren.

We all stand to benefit from keeping the boundary where it is and for not paving over significant, sensitive natural features.

Who benefits if we expand the boundary or build a warehouse on sensitive wetlands? You well know the answer. A small, very wealthy group of developers.

The question remains hanging in the air -
When you are tasked with serving the people,
- all the people,

- not just your constituents,
 - not just a few very rich builders
- just who and what are you advocating for, and more importantly, why?

Most sincerely,

Grant Ranalli