

Town vote guarantees two seats at Dufferin County Council

By Mike Pickford

Orangeville Council took steps this week to ensure the Town will always have representation at Dufferin County council meetings, naming designated replacements for Mayor Jeremy Williams and Deputy Mayor Warren Maycock should they be unable to attend the monthly gatherings.

In something of a controversial vote, the optics of which Mayor Williams said 'absolutely stinks?', Councillor Scott Wilson was drafted in as the mayor's designated replacement and Councillor Don Kidd as the deputy mayor's alternate.

The issue was brought up by Councillor Wilson who said it's important for the municipality to always have representation at County Council. He said recent changes to the Municipal Act allowed Council to move forward and name alternate members for an upper-tier council should the mayor or deputy mayor be unable to attend.

Mayor Williams first asked whether Council would consider shelving this motion until its next meeting on March 19, when he hoped Councillors Sylvia Bradley and Gail Campbell would be in attendance. That plea fell on deaf ears. He then called on Council to 'at least get a legal opinion' before signing off on the motion. Again, that request received no support.

Speaking to the Citizen following the meeting, Mayor Williams was clearly unhappy with the way Council went about this decision. Deputy Mayor Warren Maycock voted with Councillors Wilson and Kidd in approving the motion, with the mayor and Councillor Nick Garisto opposed.

'I think the optics of this absolutely stink. When you have members who want to be in those seats voting for themselves to be in them? it's not good,' Mayor Williams said. 'We had a small Council tonight, with two members missing. I'm very shocked that Council would choose to support this now rather than delay it and give the rest of Council a chance to weigh in.'

He added, 'Maybe Councillor Bradley wanted a chance to be in the position. Maybe Councillor Campbell wanted a kick at that can. Unfortunately, they didn't get that opportunity.'

The mayor said he would prefer to have no representative at County Council if he or the deputy mayor were unable to attend, questioning whether Councillors Wilson and Kidd have enough experience to make decisions on behalf of the Town at the County level.

'County Council is where the mayors and deputy mayors from all the municipalities meet. It's much different to a Town of Orangeville meeting, the atmosphere is very different,' Mayor Williams said.

'I've really tried to give a consistent message at County Council of how Orangeville feels. If I work hard to build and forge alliances with other members of County Council, and I have someone parachute in who hasn't been at all the meetings, hasn't read the minutes and reports and hasn't had the higher level of meetings I've had, how can you expect them to jump in and be there just for the sake of being there?'

He added, 'The deputy mayor and I have missed very few meetings. I really don't think there's a need for this. I also don't think it was appropriate that Council wasn't brought in as a whole to discuss it. This is a fairly major thing, what you have seen is three votes change who is at your upper tier without any public input at all. This was put on the agenda at the very last minute and I think it's really an unfair motion to bring to a Council that wasn't full tonight.'

Mayor Williams indicated he will be requesting further legal opinion at a future council meeting, as he feels the amendment to the Municipal Act has been interpreted incorrectly.

Deputy Mayor motions

In another contentious vote, Councillor Garisto failed to implement what he saw as necessary changes to the way the deputy mayor position should be filled moving forward.

His first idea, for the position to go to the councillor who receives the highest number of votes in an election, received support from Mayor Williams only. His second suggestion was for the mayor himself to select a deputy mayor of his or her choosing. Again, the motion did not receive the necessary support from Council.

Suggesting the issue had already been discussed behind the scenes, Deputy Mayor Warren Maycock made a motion that the Town release a letter from its lawyer regarding this item, indicating the town may not necessarily have the right to make such a change. Discussing the option of having the mayor appoint the deputy, Mayor Williams expressed his belief that it could only serve to benefit Council as a whole, noting it would allow the mayor to select someone they could 'trust and confide in'.

'The perception is that the deputy mayor is there to serve, assist and help the mayor. Politically, the deputy mayor (Warren Maycock) and myself have been on polar opposites of the spectrum. He's not been the kind of deputy mayor I would go out and have a coffee with, confide with, discuss things with. We just do not have that relationship,' Mayor Williams said. 'It would be nice to

have the kind of deputy mayor that saw eye-to-eye with me, or least be able to be supportive.?

He added, "By being able to pick a Deputy Mayor from among councillors, I know that person would truly represent me and the way I want the town run. I think the mayor should be able to choose a person who wants to work with him. I think that would be good for the deputy mayor, good for the mayor and good for the town, too.?"