

Sutton hearing

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of clarity was troubling. Also, the proposed changes to driveway lengths and road slopes raised concerns about erosion, a real issue in the mountainous region.

The overall reaction of citizens to Girard's presentation was disapproval.

While many of the citizens who spoke at the meeting said they were in favour of development, they did not agree with the way council was attempting to expedite dramatic changes. As one resident mentioned, the proposed changes would affect traffic in the downtown core, the mountain and the overall landscape of the area, so all citizens should be involved in the decision making process.

"We have no choice," Girard said, regarding the consultation process once the bylaws are adopted. Only residents directly affected by changes will have an opportunity to challenge.

While it was clear Mayor

Louis Dandenault had no intention of taking questions, wanting Girard to address concerns specifically related to the bylaw drafts, he was called to the microphone a number of times.

He ultimately admitted that the decision to move forward with the bylaws was a political one.

Even though the next step of the consultation process could "divide and conquer," as was suggested by one resident, presenting the bylaws at all was the decision of the council.

During question period, several citizens asked that council reconsider moving forward, asking that the bylaws be withdrawn and a more transparent and inclusive process be undertaken.

A petition to that effect, signed by 500 citizens, was presented during the meeting.

Another issue raised was the possibility of conflicts of interest within the council. Dandenault's background in real estate was called into question. He responded by saying he has

been out of the business for two years. A citizen also asked the involvement of Councillor Winston Bresee in the structuring of the bylaws prior to recusing himself, acknowledging a vested interest in properties that would be directly affected by zoning changes.

A number of former town councillors participated in the question period along with dozens of citizens, calling for more reflection before moving forward with changes that could dramatically affect the landscape of the town.

"We don't want Sutton to become like Bromont or St-Sauveur, but we don't want to become a Knowlton either," one citizen said.

Following the meeting, Mayor Dandenault said council intends to meet next week and discuss the concerns raised by citizens.

"These are complicated issues," he said, adding that despite what appeared to be general disapproval, people actually agreed with a number of

the proposed changes, namely those related to secondary dwellings and income properties.

"There are small villages like ours all over Quebec, and we're all struggling," Dandenault said, explaining that the goal of the bylaws is to help the com-

munity.

"I'll sit down with our professionals, what we can change, and we can keep," he said, "we can take the time we need," nault said, adding that laws in question are a first draft.



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