

McGibbon Hotel reconstruction opposition voice support for settlement

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Town staff have come up with what they describe as a 'win-win' for Silvercreek Commercial Builders and concerned residents when it comes to the McGibbon reconstruction.

During a special council meeting on Feb. 22, Halton Hills solicitor Jeff Wilker presented to council in a public forum the legalities of the settlement between the town and Silvercreek regarding the McGibbon Hotel reconstruction in downtown Georgetown.

During a mediation session at the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) in September, the two parties came up with a deal Wilker considers a 'win-win.'

"I'm confident that what I'm reporting to you tonight is a settlement that can be fully recommended and was fully recommended to town council as the appropriate resolution of this development proposal."

Details of the settlement include reducing the condominium height from 11 storeys to 10 storeys, creating 20 indoor parking spaces for the public, and reusing existing brick from the McGibbon as it stands today in the final reconstruction.

In addition, Silvercreek will be making a \$500,000 cash contribution to the town to go toward heritage preservation and downtown Georgetown initiatives.

Although the settlement was agreed upon back in September, the meeting was done confidentially, as required by the OMB.

"It's essential and is a requirement of the OMB process in mediation," Wilker explained. "You can't expect people and parties to engage in mediations and have candid discussions and then have that candid discussion reported out publicly. In order for the mediation process to work, there has to be a candid interchange between the parties."

During his delegation, Ward 3 Coun. Moya Johnson asked about the condition of the bricks and what would happen should they become cracked and unusable. Wilker assured the town has used the correct technology to replicate the bricks, and several policies have been put in place to prevent Silvercreek from going back on their word, including liquidation damages directly to the town.

Ward 4 Coun. Bob Inglis asked about the use of demolition in the report, referring to the image of a cannonball taking down a building and leaving a pile of bricks behind.

Wilker explained the use of the word is for legalities only: the words 'deconstruction' and 'reconstruction' are not found in the Ontario Building Code.

After a question from Mayor Rick Bonnette, Wilker explained if the hearing process had gone through without the settlement, the town could face a two- to three-week hearing that could cost upwards of \$250,000.

After his delegation, a few residents and business representatives stepped forward to voice their support.

Sarah Hughes, a local resident and Save the McGibbon petition member, told council she was pleased with the end result and thanked members for their diligent work.

Ted Flanagan, chair of the Georgetown BIA, said members were looking forward to the change and some have

already secured some retail space.

Marnie Hughes, chair of the Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce, spoke on behalf of the 500 members, voicing their support of the project. Architectural Conservancy of Ontario Halton Hills branch president Pat Farley also spoke, saying she had a couple of concerns, but overall, was pleased the town listened to her concerns.

“Georgetown’s heart beats at the corner of Mill and Main, and it will still be beating.”