

Faubourg Lac-Brome impact studies demanded

2017/12/12 by R.L.B.

More than 110 people attended the public consultation meeting about the Faubourg Lac-Brome project on the site of the former Brome Lake golf course, convened by the Town on Saturday morning, December 9, 2017, from 11 am to 1:30 pm.

The presentations dealt with the regulatory framework and the project itself. Citizens had the opportunity to express their views and ask questions about this significant project that will transform 64 hectares at the corner of Rte 243 and Rte 215, at the entrance to the town. These discussions were cordial and respectful, each person trying to express his or her concerns and propose solutions.

Among the questions:

Was there a market study done, given that the lots on rue du Sanctuaire have remained unsold for at least 12 years? The promoter stated that the lots were assessed by a professional evaluator, but that no market study has been done. The promoter expects to sell these properties for an average of \$80,000, according to an auto-construct approach over several years. How can precautions be taken should the project, in the end, become a white elephant?

Another citizen asked if the Town had carried out an economic analysis, given that additional tax revenues would not be forthcoming in the early years and that there would possibly be expenditures necessary for road maintenance, snow removal, the park, etc.; to which the Town replied that no economic analysis had been carried out;

A citizen asked if the developer was sure there would be no impact on the supply of potable water to neighbouring properties; the developer noted that a very preliminary study by a hydrologist had been conducted, who had felt that, because the properties are situated at a lower altitude than the village of Foster, no impact on the water table was foreseen. A citizen stated that most of the lots (70%) were at the same altitude as the village of Foster; another called for a proper study by a hydrologist as an essential pre- condition before going farther with the project;

Still on the theme of potable water supply, the developer said that the amount of water pumped for irrigation by the golf course for irrigation was greater than the amount that would be needed for the 50 homes in the project; several citizens remained puzzled because the situation is not comparable (drought vs ongoing supply, ground water, water from artesian wells)!

One citizen asked about the logic of the Town allowing this unserviced development, while there is a long-standing need in the Foster and north-of-Lakeside sectors for a local waste water treatment system; the Town replied that such an approach had been considered, but because it would have delayed the project for several years, given that the requirement to include this area in the urban perimeter had already been refused by Québec in January, 2013;

Another spoke of his concern related to soil quality, particularly in the rue du Sanctuaire sector, to ensure that waste water was properly treated and the water table not contaminated; the developer stated that percolation tests had been carried out; the citizen insisted that a more complete study be carried out;

A citizen asked that a parking lot be laid out on the site adjacent to the Tourism office to provide public access, which could be situated on the two reversed gradient lots (the former golf range), for sports activities; the Town indicated its possible interest in acquiring the property;

Someone asked about the Town's regulatory process Town (use of the PPCMOI, the by-law that allows block amendments to the zoning by-law) in relation to the Comprehensive Planning Program (PAE) which is provided for in the master plan, the planning program, and is much stricter in terms of management of the territory; the Town noted that it had made this choice for reasons of flexibility and to accelerate the project;

A citizen said she was uneasy about the enlargement of the commercial uses in the zone, because this could compromise other neighbouring businesses, specifically the convenience stores (dépanneurs) and a neighbouring daycare centre. The Town indicated that the "local businesses" land use would be allowed, this was questioned by another citizen who maintained that the only local business to be allowed in this zone should be directly related to recreational activities;

A citizen asked why it was necessary for the developer to obtain so many exemptions to the existing by-law and whether it would not be possible to develop a project that would follow the rules, especially since the property is not yet subdivided; the developer stated that it would be very difficult to put in place an economically viable project while respecting all the norms;

The developer said that there was no specific access provided to the lake in this project.

He also noted that the access and exit for Sanctuaire on Lakeside Road would not be used by emergency services.

To summarize, citizens wish to obtain many more scientific and economic assurances, related specifically to the supply of potable water and waste water treatment. The developer and the Town have heard the questions and suggestions of the citizens. A second draft of the project, with or without modifications should be adopted by the Town council in the coming weeks / months, opening the door to a referendum on the matter (petition to open a register, opening the register and the referendum, if necessary) by the citizens of the 13 contiguous zones.