

Observations and comments from Public Meeting held Dec 16th, 2020

After observing the Dec 16th meeting I would like to offer some general thoughts on process and policy for consideration.

1. When a property is being severed for infilling purposes all related planning items should be kept as a package to be considered at the same time. Neighbours and the municipality need to know the planned end state of the property to make informed decisions. What is going to be built on the severed land is more important than the severance itself. If a zoning change request is not tabled with the severance request than a mechanism and or policy be put in place that binds the severance to the existing zoning.
2. For a residential infill in an established community (i.e. old Komoka) there needs to be more specific guidance and policy with respect to height and setbacks. In the current design guidelines only front yard setbacks are addressed. Any lots resulting from a severance should comply with the existing zoning for side and back yards and height of the abutting properties. For the Duke St severance presented at the meeting there are new homes in the area that have increased height maximums. However these new homes do not abut the new lots and should not be considered as supporting the variance.
3. When speaking to variances and other related issues the word “generally” should not be used to justify or rationalize changes. It should be clearly stated that the request complies or does not comply. If it doesn’t comply it should be noted on a percentage basis of the variance request. “Generally” is too objective and metrics should be used to make the decision whenever possible.
4. At the Dec 16th meeting there was a minor variance request on a previously approved 3 lot severance on a .5 acre lot. In an established neighbourhood consisting of .5 acre lots two lots from one should be the maximum. I didn’t see how this variance would impact the lot coverage. Also this area does not have curbs and gutters and storm water from the roof and road are supposed to be absorbed by the property. This lot is being overdeveloped and I hope that it is not used as precedent for future requests.
5. The Municipality needs to work towards an environment that make requests for changes to zoning and Official plan the exception and not the norm. Some Developers have the mindset that they should get exactly what they ask for. At the Dec 16th meeting I observed an agent for an applicant express his dissatisfaction that the Municipal Planner had requested modifying his zoning change request. He mocked the recommendation to change the setbacks and then threatened to change the build profile to make it less appealing to the neighbours. The bylaws are there to bring conformity to the neighbourhood and give assurance to residents that zoning changes will protect their property and their enjoyment of it. A policy needs to be implemented to strongly uphold existing bylaws. It may be necessary to go the appeal board a few times to get the point across.
6. I do not believe there are any bylaws or policy for rear yard access for attached dwellings. If this is correct then there needs to be. There are other reasons other than aesthetics to limit the number of attached homes in a row to 8 and I believe some of those reasons are rear yard access for maintenance and emergencies.
7. I cannot find any street design in the Urban Design Standards with respect to dead ends or cul-de-sacs. Whether streets are under Municipal control or privately owned they should be designed for safety and ease of service. No dead ends and at least two entrances at a minimum should be the target.

Thank you for your consideration of these points.

Paul Houghton