

## Residents voice anger over LRV storage facility 'done deal'

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It was happening right before their eyes and they almost didn't know it.

However, after puzzled Leslieville residents saw three architectural design teams pitch ideas for a new TTC storage barn, which they don't want near their neighbourhood, during a public meeting at the Toronto EMS and Fire Academy on May 19, they smelled something was up.

And it didn't help that a lawyer was in the room.

"The community has quite objected to this facility and it seems like it's already been decided," said resident David Donnelly, who practices environmental law and holds a master's degree in urban regional planning.

"Is it now being decided on? Are all the other options out and this is it no matter what?"

TTC Chair Adam Giambrone told residents at the meeting the works and infrastructure committee submitted a recommendation to city council earlier that day for the \$345 million home of the city's new fleet of light rail vehicles (LRV) to be near the Ashbridges Bay Treatment Plant by 2012.

Donnelly then pressed city staff to answer why AECOM, the project consulting company hired by the TTC, is using taxpayers' money to host meetings on one-sided decisions made without them.

He said he was also interested in their corporate policy because he said the firm was having a similar meeting with the town of Innisfil residents over the expansion of the Alcona Wastewater Treatment Plant, lands which may feature a mega-marina at Big Bay Point.

Donnelly said residents are afraid to protest that project because of the millions of dollars in strategic lawsuits against public participation or "SLAPP" suits, a trick used to silence critics by making it seem legally expensive to uphold their cause.

"Obviously individual contractors can have legal liabilities but in our case we are legally responsible and the TTC has never, and will not, neither will the city as a government, sue anyone who offers opinions, suggestions, criticisms or whatever," Giambrone said. "I mean, if you go back and review, it's never happened, at least in the seven years that I've been around."

Leslieville residents then grilled city staff for an explanation as to why the committee went ahead and made the recommendation.

"They're saying in June that we'll get to submit deputations, but you people (city staff) are being commissioned to make a plan when the site has supposedly not been decided upon. Are we as citizens so powerless?" asked Suzanne McAllister who lives near Greenwood Avenue and Gerrard Street.

"(Urban planner) Jane Jacobs would roll over in her grave to think that Toronto is supposed to be moving toward a walkable neighbourhood society. Has anyone thought about what this yard will do to these two communities, Leslieville and the beaches to the east, when this constant traffic of 100-foot-long streetcars will be (backlogging) the road that leads to the Gardiner?"

Her neighbour, Greg Smith, asked Beaches-East York Councillor Sandra Bussin, who came with Toronto-Danforth Councillor Paula Fletcher, if she agreed with Fletcher's disapproval of the LRV route running north from Lake Shore Boulevard East.

"Yesterday, Paula and I sent notices to the works committee and the city will report back. From the beginning

neither Paula nor I were for this location, but the reality is we're dealing with timing and decisions have to be made," Bussin said. "So I haven't quite determined where I am, but I can tell you that I don't like it coming down Connaught (Avenue) and I don't like it coming down Coxwell (Avenue) in my ward."

Dissatisfied with her response, Smith insisted Bussin say if she agreed with Fletcher or not to which she replied, "I've already answered your question."

"No you have not," said Smith, who quickly left.

After the meeting, Donnelly said it's wrong and unfair the only chance the community has to counter the committee was through a commission gathering on June 2 at 1 p.m. when most Leslieville residents will be working.

"This inviting us to a meeting and talking about landscaping is ridiculous. The community hasn't been consulted properly," he said. "They're expediting a decision."

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