



# Development isn't easy - DAVE DALE's Soapboxing

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This column is being written at the East Ferris Public Library beside the arena in Astorville. It's supper time Wednesday evening.

My not-so-little-anymore boy is getting ready for a bantam hockey game and I don't want to scoot back to the office to finish my assignments in time to catch the third period. The price of gasoline is part of the equation.

I'm not sure why I haven't come over here before during practices. Parents shouldn't hang out at arenas as much as they do. It's not healthy for the body or soul, the negativity erodes the spirit if you let it. There are about half a dozen adults in here and just as many kids. It's a good thing to see.

My first choice for entertainment is always watching my kid playing a hockey game, followed closely by baseball.

A distant third preference for a night like this would have been the public presentations planned at city hall. The Ontario Municipal Board hearing pitting Laurentian Heights Ltd. developer John Wallace against city staff is both amusing and enlightening.

It continues today and might stretch into Friday. They should charge admission and put the money toward the upcoming multi-sports facility study.

Wallace wants to get off the hook for designating about 11.5 hectares of steep slope on the escarpment as city parkland. It's been a featured part of his 151-lot subdivision plan for decades. But staff have started putting the squeeze on him about trees and the definition for horizons as it involves the view afforded the people who buy his lots.

It's complicated, these subdivision agreements, especially when they're phased in piece by piece. Basically, one agreement in 2007 states the biggest piece of open space will be designated as parkland as Kenrita Drive is developed in stages, meaning the land abutting the south lots would turn into city parkland as people build houses above it.

The city, however, decided they want it quicker than that and started requiring chunks as he sought approvals to develop other streets, such as the Surrey Drive extension agreement in 2008. Of course, this erosion of relationship started happening shortly after he cut down trees on city

property to improve the view.

Staff began squeezing the definition of what view he can maintain and Wallace didn't like the hardball tactics.

Wallace told the OMB he still doesn't want to develop the land, he just doesn't want to convey it as part of the development plan anymore. Wallace prefers to "gift" it to the community another way, which likely means he can negotiate better terms in how it's used, what it's named, etc.

You can feel the tension between the parties involved. It's almost as much fun as watching a good hockey game, with elbows flying and the lawyers hacking away with their intellectual sticks.

The OMB will decide who is scoring points and who wins. Hopefully, in the end, the community will get an escarpment protected from too much development while reaping all the economic benefits of having big lavish homes built and the taxes that go with them.

TAGLINE: Dave Dale's column appears Thursday and Saturday.

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