

C37
COMMUNICATION
COUNCIL – APRIL 26, 2022
CW (PM) - Report No. 17, Item 4

From: Clerks@vaughan.ca
To: [Adelina Bellisario](#)
Cc: [Francesca Laratta](#)
Subject: FW: [External] Fwd: April 26, 2022 Council Meeting: 8001 Bathurst Street Application, Rezoning of amendment file Z.19.040, and File OP.19.016
Date: April-25-22 11:56:56 AM
Attachments: [FRA-letter-to-council-April-25-2022.pdf](#)
[FRA-letter-to-council-April-25-2022.docx](#)

From: Flamingo Ratepayers Association <info@flamingoratepayer.ca>
Sent: Monday, April 25, 2022 11:54 AM
To: Clerks@vaughan.ca
Subject: [External] Fwd: April 26, 2022 Council Meeting: 8001 Bathurst Street Application, Rezoning of amendment file Z.19.040, and File OP.19.016

----- Original Message -----

From: Flamingo Ratepayers Association <info@flamingoratepayer.ca>
To: "clerks@vaughan.ca" <clerks@vaughan.ca>
Date: 04/25/2022 10:38 AM
Subject: April 26, 2022 Council Meeting: 8001 Bathurst Street Application, Rezoning of amendment file Z.19.040, and File OP.19.016

Good morning,

Please find attached a letter (Word and PDF format) from the Flamingo Ratepayers Association to be delivered to Council for Council's Chamber meeting, Tuesday April 26, 2022 @ 1:00 PM.

If you require more information immediately, please contact Naomi Shacter, VP, Flamingo Ratepayers Association at [REDACTED]

Sincerely,
Anet Mor
President, Flamingo Ratepayers Association



info@flamingoratepayer.ca

Flamingo Ratepayers Association



info@flamingoratepayer.ca

Flamingo Ratepayers Association



April 25, 2022

Dear Vaughan City Council,

RE: 8001 Bathurst Street Application, Rezoning of amendment file Z.19.040, and File OP.19.016

I'm Anet Mor, FRA president, and I'm writing to you in response to the comments made at the Committee of the Whole Public Meeting on April 5, 2022 regarding 8001 Bathurst Street, Agenda #4, and to address comments made in a subsequent email exchange with Councillor Shefman (attached at the end of this letter for reference, although you all were cc'd at the time) and FRA vice-president, Naomi Shacter.

Unfortunately, due to family matters I was not able to attend the meeting personally. My absence was noted by Councillor Shefman and mistaken as approval of the new development plan submitted by the proponent. However, I would like to clarify that:

- A. I did submit a written deputation for the City planner and Council to review by the deadline; and
- B. There were other members of the executive present at the meeting making oral deputations; Naomi Shacter, Vice President; Jeff Springer, Treasurer; and Edgardo Szulstein, Director. The meeting was seen live stream by other members of our group.

To begin, the FRA is deeply disappointed with the lack of discussion between our group and the proponent, and the transparency by which this process has unfolded. At no time did the proponent cooperate in forming a workgroup with the FRA. (A timeline of the process to date is provided at the end of this letter.)

The FRA appreciates that the proponent has reduced the building size in an 'extraordinary' measure, however the prior proposal was neither realistic nor feasible. Regardless of the improvements, we continue to identify core issues that have yet to be addressed by the proponent.

1. PARKING DEFICIT:

REQUIRED PARKING SPACE: 644 spots

PROPOSED PARKING SPACE: 154 spots

PARKING DEFICIT: 490 spots

Councillor Shefman noted in his email, to FRA vice-president Naomi Shacter, the following: *"There is no doubt that parking on the streets in the vicinity of the synagogue is a problem. It is an issue that is recognized by the city, but it is an issue that little can be done about."* And further stated: *"Over the years I have made numerous attempts to deal with the street parking situation to no avail."*

If this is the case, it stands to reason that expanding the usage and size of the site to include a residential apartment building along with more institutional space will only compound the negative effects of a parking deficit further.

This substantial parking deficit has led to:

1. Overflow street parking; and
2. Narrowing of streets that put pedestrians and drivers at risk, and reduce the accessibility for emergency vehicles (this is particularly the case at the Northern part of Highcliffe Drive); and
3. Street congestion; and
4. Reduced street parking for residential guests and visitors.

Expected outcomes of a continued parking deficit with increased usage of proposed development include:

1. Larger and more frequent events (holiday celebrations and festivities, weddings, and barmitzvahs—often held on Saturdays) will bring more ‘drivers’ (members, guests and staff) to 8001 Bathurst Street; and
2. Increased use of institutional space for education will bring more visitors/drivers to the site, and
3. The proposed 5-storey building will bring more visitors/drivers to the site; and
4. A further increase in overflow parking, narrowing of streets and street congestion.

Possible solutions that don’t entail doing nothing:

1. The proponent can keep his gates open to accommodate those that drive on the sabbath and holidays, which is evident by the overflow parking; and
2. Build enough underground parking to accommodate the site and its users; or
3. Don't make the parking and traffic situation worse or potentially dangerous, by adding another structure to the property that, by the way, includes expanding the synagogue’s ability to hold larger and more frequent events, without first addressing the parking deficiency.

Side note: the proposed apartment building is bordering on discriminatory practices by precluding anyone from renting here that is not only not Jewish, but also Jewish applicants that are not orthodox.

2. PARKING LOT CLOSURES:

SABBATH PARKING CLOSURES:

**The parking lot will be inaccessible from Friday at dusk to Saturday at dusk weekly
(104 affected days)**

HOLIDAY PARKING CLOSURES:

The parking lot will be inaccessible during holidays

(approximately 26 affected days throughout the year — from the previous day at sundown to the following day at sundown)

Because a parking deficit already exists at 8001 Bathurst Street, the habitual closure of the parking lot gates further exacerbates the parking issues resulting from a lack of parking on site.

It's reasonable that the City may not have fully understood the demographic of the synagogue in the past. But that is no longer the case. While the synagogue is Orthodox in its practice, the majority of congregants and guests are not. In fact, pre-pandemic, a majority of congregants and guests drove to the synagogue on the Sabbath and religious holidays, a time when the gates are closed, hence the parking issue.

As such, the FRA and our residents are asking that The City not bypass the City's own parking requirements for a facility because it is "meant" to be Orthodox. The synagogue still holds events, and family gatherings throughout the year that require hundreds of people (members, guests and staff) to drive and park on nearby streets which will only continue to compound existing parking issues.

Side note: The proposed Orthodox synagogue (Zichron Yisroel) at 300 Atkinson was cancelled due to lack of available parking onsite.

3. OUTREACH PRACTICE ATTRACTS MORE VISITORS & GUESTS THAT DRIVE:

CHABAD IS AN OUTREACH SYNAGOGUE:

This location in particular attracts members and guests from all over York Region through its marketing efforts, for example with savvy holiday promotions like 'pizza in the hut'.

By its very nature, Chabad is an outreach synagogue. It invites all Jews, regardless of their level of observation, to partake in synagogue events and services, which is wonderful, but that also means it attracts members and guests from all over the region.

The argument that synagogue goers are orthodox and therefore do not drive on holidays or times when the gates will be closed simply does not apply to this particular site.

Please bare in mind that it's not just members that drive to the synagogue—it's also visitors, guests and staff that are driving to partake/work in special events like purim celebrations, high holidays, weddings, barmitzvahs, batmitzvah club celebrations, chanukah festivities and fundraisers to name a few.

Below is a timeline of interactions between the FRA, and the proponent and Councillor Shefman:

2020 interactions

- | | |
|--------|--|
| JUN 4 | The proponent hosted a virtual open house to review the proposed plan |
| JUN 20 | FRA members (approximately 50 members) meet with Councillor Shefman to discuss the proposal and learn how to advocate against. |

- JUN 30 An email was sent to Councillor Shefman that FRA would like to work with the proponent.
- JUL 21 FRA met with the proponent and his team virtually, and unfortunately there were no answers to our group's questions. The proponents consultants and advisor stated "we need to do our homework and will get back to you."
- SEP 22 The first Committee of the Whole Meeting. The proponent surprised council and members of the community by submitting a new plan for presentation, not previously shared with the FRA or community members prior to the September 22, 2020 meeting.
- OCT 20 As there was no further discussion with the proponent, FRA president arranged a phone call with Councillor Shefman to discuss his help in putting together a working group. He said he would.

2021 interactions

- JAN 26 There was no update about the working group. Once again, FRA president reached out by email to Councillor Shefman. He indicated he will speak to the proponent to arrange something.
- MAR 26 FRA president receives an email from Councillor Shefman indicating that "the proposal of the synagogue has now been radically altered in a variety of ways including a smaller building", and that he would keep FRA president posted.
- JUN 1 Once again, FRA president sends out another email requesting an update from Councillor Shefman. His response was that he will speak to the proponent.
- NOV 18 The proponent held an open house to present a new proposal to community members. Participants were allowed to ask questions through a chat, however only select questions were answered, however vaguely with no opportunity to engage in a two-way dialogue.

On behalf of the FRA and our community, I ask City council to consider the existing parking issues that have been allowed to grow, before rendering your decision about the current application.

Anet Mor, President
Flamingo Ratepayer's Association

○ **Flamingo Ratepayers Association** <info@flamingoratepayer.ca>
To maurizio.bevilacqua@vaughan.ca, mario.ferri@vaughan.ca and 24 others

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Good afternoon Mayor Bevilacqua and Members of Council,

I spoke at the Community of the Whole Public Meeting last night (April 5, 7:00, Agenda #4) regarding the application at 8001 Bathurst Street, and I'm completely dismayed by Councillor Shefman's misrepresentation of the facts regarding this application.

I wanted to respond during the session, but was asked to submit my comments in writing for the April 26th Council meeting. I appreciate the long hours all of you put in to facilitate these public meetings and understand there wasn't time to counter Councillor Shefman's narrative. However, rather than wait until the 26th, I felt it important to share the community's perspective and experience with this project and applicant.

It has not been rainbows and gumdrops, to say the least, and has in fact been very stressful for the greater community, despite what felt like cheerleading for this development, as shown last night by our Ward 5 representative's comments.

The proponent has not been transparent with the community, nor have they willingly worked with the community outside their own (schul) membership, most of whom live outside the community. In fact, our Ward 5 representative did little to facilitate a workgroup at all, which I might add, there was none, even though it was requested numerous times by the Flamingo Ratepayer's Association (FRA).

It should be noted, that the size of the proposed building was just one of many, many concerns that residents raised, and its reduction, significant or not, does not in any way negate the parking deficit or overflow parking—raised last night. Parking is not a trivial concern.

I'd like to mention as well, that I am a member of the original group (now the FRA) that raised concerns about this project. Anet Mor, is the president of the FRA, and could not speak last night for personal reasons, however she did submit a deputation. Her absence should not in any way be inferred as someone who has abandoned this project or is happy with the process and outcome to date, as implied by Councillor Shefman.

In addition to myself, there were two other members of the original group/FRA who spoke last night as individuals: Edgardo Szulstein and Jeff Springer. It's disappointing that Councillor Shefman did not know our group still had representation at last night's meeting, regardless of Anet's absence. And I have to wonder if this project has had the Councillor's stamp of approval all along regardless of the numerous and very real deficiencies in planning on the applicant's part, and the many concerns continued to be raised by the community.

Contrary to the remarks made during last night's meeting, our group is very much alive, present and engaged regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

Naomi Shacter
Vice-president, Flamingo Ratepayer's Association

info@flamingoratepayer.ca
Flamingo Ratepayers Association

Hi Naomi

Thank you for writing to clarify the position of the Flamingo Ratepayers Association regarding the application presented at last evening's public meeting.

Please do understand that I had no idea that you and two of the other speakers were representing the Ratepayers. Nobody identified themselves as representing the Ratepayers group. In fact, nobody from the Ratepayers Association had reached out to me since the new plan was proposed by the proponent. My last contact with Anet was to urge her to continue to speak with the Rabbi about your concerns.

I would have really appreciated hearing from you prior to last night's meeting about your continuing concerns. The last that I had heard was that there were ongoing discussions taking place between your group and the Rabbi regarding the new plan. The height of the original proposal - 12-storeys was reduced to 5. Indeed, as stated during the discussion, it is quite extraordinary for a proponent of a development to be so responsive to the community - as one of my other council colleagues said: "It is almost unheard of!"

I guess I jumped to a conclusion, in the absence of any communications from you, that the Ratepayers were satisfied with the new plan being proposed. Sorry for that.

I do have to comment though on what I believe is one of your current concerns - the parking issues that exist at present. There is no doubt that parking on the streets in the vicinity of the synagogue is a problem. It is an issue that is recognized by the city, but it is an issue that little can be done about. The potential addition of vehicles from the residents in the new building parking on the streets will most likely have little effect based upon the number of units, the possibility that many of the residents will be orthodox Jews who will not drive on the Sabbath or on holy days and the current bylaws that do not permit overnight parking on our streets. When the synagogue was originally approved, it was recognized by the Council of that time, as it is for other orthodox synagogues, that many of the members do not drive to the building for services. They were allowed to have less than the usually required number of parking spots.

Over the years I have made numerous attempts to deal with the street parking situation to no avail.

To sum up, based on what was said last night that the prime remaining issue of concern is parking. One of the speakers also addressed concerns with privacy for the homes to the south of the synagogue properties. His suggestion, substantial landscaping, I am sure could be added to the plan.

Please do let me know if there are other issues that your group would like to address.

Regards

Alan

Alan Shefman, Councillor

Ward 5 - Thornhill
City of Vaughan

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-- We are what we do, not what we say --

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<https://ward5.vaughan.ca/Subscribe>

Dear Councillor Shefman,

Thank you very much for your response.

(I apologize in advance for the exposed email list if it comes through that way; we've switched to a new email system and need to iron out a few kinks.)

As a new Ratepayer's Association, still in our infancy, we are continuously learning the protocols and will identify ourselves in the future.

There actually has not been any ongoing two-way discussion with the Rabbi/proponent and our group, which is why we had hoped that you could have facilitated that, and moved the proponent to work with the FRA directly. My understanding is that he did discuss the project with some members of the schul—and I stress, schul members only—and maybe that's where the notion came from that there were ongoing discussions with our group.

After much urging behind the scenes, the proponent did *come to the table* in the way of a virtual community open house in November, 2021. The format was not conducive to a discussion. It was simply to learn about the updated plans. Community members were able to ask questions through a chat to be then called upon at the discretion of the moderator/developer, Lanterra Developments.

The community and the FRA were not satisfied with that meeting, but rather frustrated with the lack of transparency, and residents have expressed their concern that this was a done deal from the beginning. To be quite honest, the applicant's attitude has, from the beginning, been one of indifference to the greater community's concerns. He has a vision for our community, that unfortunately is not shared by his neighbours.

But you are right—it is extraordinary that the proponent was able to reduce the building from 12 to 5 storeys, but not surprising. The original submission was never ever realistic to begin with—it was like trying to fit a football field into a football. And maybe that was the proponent's strategy all along.

I don't believe however there is little that can be done about the parking, as stated in your email—or that we should just accept it and let the problem grow.

1. The proponent can keep his gates open to accommodate those that drive, which we know they do; and
2. Build enough underground parking to accommodate the site and its users; or
3. Don't make the parking and traffic situation worse or potentially dangerous, by adding another structure to the property that, which by the way, includes expanding the schul's ability to hold larger and more frequent events, without addressing the parking deficiency.

I would however like to address the concept that parking was originally approved because the congregation would be orthodox and therefore not driving on the Sabbath. That argument no longer holds water, as we now know that this is was never the case. The City was obviously misled by the proponent about the membership composition, and the City was most likely not made aware that the gates would be closed ever, especially during high attendance, as most members live outside the area and do drive.

I can personally attest to this, because I drove to this synagogue many years ago before moving to the neighbourhood. I have friends as well who drive from as far away as Oakridges, and I can guarantee they didn't walk or take public transit.

Chabad, by its very nature is an outreach schul. It invites all Jews, regardless of their level of observation to partake in schul events and services, which is a wonderful thing, but that means it attracts members and guests from all over.

Our position has always been that this proposed building exacerbates numerous problems that already exist within our community.

We welcome the opportunity to sit down with you and discuss all the issues, and will be in touch soon to arrange a convenient time for all to meet, for after the holidays.

Sincerely,
Naomi Shacter
Vice-president, Flamingo Ratepayer's Association

...

On 04/06/2022 2:47 PM Alan Shefman <alan.shefman@vaughan.ca> wrote: Hi Naomi Thank you for writing to clarify the position of the Flamingo Ratepayers Association regarding the application presented at last ...
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