

**Joe Schonberger**  
**RR#1 Port Robinson ON L0S 1K0**

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Planning and Economic Development Committee  
c/o Regional Clerk, 1815 Sir Issac Brock Way  
P.O. Box 1042, Thorold, Ontario L2V 4T7  
[clerk@niagararegion.ca](mailto:clerk@niagararegion.ca)

**Re: Draft Woodlands Bylaw**

Dear Valued Members of the Planning and Economic Development Committee,

I am an independent commentator. All the words and ideas herein contained are my own and are not meant to be reflective of any organization or committee that I may now or ever have served on.

The name change to Woodlands Bylaw is appropriate. It is good that the Bylaw is returning to the Region. It never should have left in the first place.

As long as there have been Woodlands Bylaws in Niagara Region there has been an Advisory Committee. Within the context of Niagara Region there is nothing irregular about having one. The Advisory Committee worked closely with Staff to develop versions of circumference limit Bylaws as well as the Good Forestry Practices Bylaw of 2006. Much of that Bylaw has survived revisions in 2008 and 2020. The Advisory Committee was the "Project Team" of the day.

Advisory Committees do what ever their hosts ask them to do. A successful Advisory Committee meets on a regular basis, is given adequate information, and comes to meetings prepared to work. The host needs to want to work with the Advisory Committee and give them reasons to be there.

I was a long time member of the Advisory Committee both at the Region and the NPCA.

At the Region the Advisory Committee did what the Region asked of us. We reviewed Activity Reports and from time to time were asked to discuss legal matters including possible contraventions in camera. Legal would have known about this protocol and at least once someone from the Legal Department sat in during an in camera discussion. We always rose with Report supporting the Actions of the Bylaw Officer. There were never any leaks of confidential information. The Region asked us to do this. Their house. Their rules.

The Region decided to delegate authority to enforce the Bylaw to the NPCA. It took 20 months of negotiation to get it there. This resulted in the amended 2008 version of the bylaw which reflected that change, At the time Regional Staff had proposed removing the Advisory Committee. At least they did not trash us as the current Project Team has. Ironically the NPCA asked for it to be retained. However the section of the Bylaw concerning the Advisory Committee was not well written and could allow the NPCA to do what ever they wanted with it or nothing at all. They were contractually obligated to maintain an Advisory Committee.

The Advisory Committee went to the NPCA. Management there had promised us that we would play an important role at the NPCA. We went with open minds and without expectations. We went there to work with them on forestry issues and hopefully to improve relations with the NPCA. There was culture shock adapting to how the NPCA did things. There was an apparent expectation that we would show up, be quiet, tell them what they wanted to hear and then go home. They seemed to have trouble coping with an experienced and engaged group. Staff often seemed nervous to be in the room with us.

As might be imagined the Advisory Committee was curious about how the Bylaw was working. Gentle questions were not warmly greeted and seemed to annoy Staff who tended to guard any information closely. They sought a legal opinion from the Niagara Region Legal Department who

apparently told them not to tell us very much. It became clear that the NPCA would not be asking the same things that the Region had asked of us. Their house. Their rules. We rolled with it and moved on and kept showing up at meetings. That was 11 years ago. It is puzzling as to why NPCA Staff and the Project team are so fixated on this.

After the Director of Land Management was fired we never met again. The Bylaw Officer really did not want to and based on the wording of the section he did not really have to. We would have come to meetings if any had been called.

One could ask how not calling a meeting for 7 years fits with the contractual obligations that the NPCA had under the Service Level Agreement to maintain an Advisory Committee.

There was concern that if we pushed too hard to get the Advisory Committee going again that we might get the Bylaw Officer, who was well received among the woodland owning public, fired. They did that a lot at the NPCA.

As a long time member of the Advisory Committee I am appalled by the conduct of the Project Team. It is one thing to remove the Advisory Committee. It is quite another to spread falsehoods both verbally and in print to justify that recommendation.

I was there. They were not. Be assured that there was NEVER any expectation that we would ever decide or vote on either permits or alleged contraventions. There was NEVER any expectation that we would take confidential information and discuss it with other members of the Public. We did what we were asked to do to the best of our abilities.

The Staff comments in the section of PDS 16-2020 regarding the Advisory Committee are uninformed nonsense seemingly meant to discredit and demonize the Advisory Committee. This does not reflect well on the Project team.

There is merit in an Advisory Committee if its duties are properly prescriptive and Staff is properly motivated to work with them.

**It is of paramount importance to recognize the contributions of everyone who served on the Advisory Committee to woodland conservation and the development of versions of the Bylaw over many years. This would include the latest proposal which was built on the foundation of what the Advisory Committee and Regional Staff built in the 2006 version.**

**Members who served on the Advisory Committee over many years do not deserve the disrespect they have gotten from the Project Team. A public apology is in order.**

Thank you for your consideration of this.

Yours truly,

Joe schonberger.