

Councillor Bill Evans's statement to Sackville Town Council, Dec. 14, 2020 on proposed abattoir:

To begin with, I'd like to remind people of the nature of our jobs as councillors. It is to make decisions in the best interests of the entire municipality... not just what some people want and certainly not just what we want personally.

When making decisions by voting, the majority decides, but we need to be mindful of the interests of the minority too, because it's the entire municipality's interests that need to be considered. But along with concern about the possibility of a "tyranny of the majority", we also need to be careful not to be overly influenced by a vocal minority. While dozens of messages, and all of them against something, is significant, we need to be aware that it represents less than one percent of our constituents.

But, as I have regularly said, our job isn't simply to do what people want. It's to make decisions that best serve the interests of the entire municipality. As an individual, I can just say: "this is what I want" and leave it there. But, I don't have that luxury as a councillor. I have to put aside my personal interests. I have to ask and answer the questions: what is the best option legally and practically available to us? What will achieve the greatest good for the most people and the least harm for any? What are the reasons for making this choice? Can I explain them? Are there general principles involved which are being (and will be) invoked consistently and fairly?

Business people have told me that, more than lower taxes and fewer regulations, what they want from government is stability, predictability. They want to know the "rules of the game" and they don't want them to change suddenly and unpredictably. From us, they want (and deserve) fairness and consistency. Residents generally want us to preserve what's already good about Sackville i.e. don't allow things to threaten our quality of life.

Often in life, we have to balance competing interests and there are several interested parties with stakes here: the applicant, the neighbours (both residential and commercial) and the town, not just as individuals, but the whole town - our legal jeopardy and our reputation. Think of the message it would send to prospective developers if we reacted negatively and arbitrarily to business initiatives without good reasons. I'm reminded of Doug Griffiths' book, *13 Ways to Kill a Community*. Way #2 is: "If death of your community is

the ultimate goal, don't bother doing anything about attracting new people and new businesses to your community; don't change your bylaws or do anything to entice business development".

First of all, let's acknowledge that abattoirs are "Yucky" operations. Literally, they are places where animals are taken to be killed and then cut-up. But, I would argue that that by itself doesn't warrant us not having them, for consider this...the town spends much time, effort and money every year dealing with actual excrement, and we're all glad they do. So, "Yucky" by itself shouldn't be a deal-breaker.

Some people don't eat meat. For some of them, it may be a matter of taste or health benefits but, for many of those I know, it is for two other reasons: One - it isn't sustainable in the context of its massive contribution to Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Two - the PETA reason. PETA's motto is: "Animals are not ours to experiment on, eat, wear, use for entertainment, or abuse". So, people who don't eat meat have a legitimate "beef" with abattoirs.

But for the rest of us meat-eaters, it would be the height of hypocrisy to be completely against the existence of abattoirs. However, we do have a legitimate interest in where abattoirs are located and how they are operated.

There has been much talk of late about the importance of business or economic development. I myself have said that I consider Sackville to be open for business. What that means for me is that my initial response is positive when people say that they want to start or expand a business in Sackville. Business development can mean more jobs, more tax revenue and add to the vitality of our town. But we must safeguard the quality of life that makes Sackville such an attractive place to live, work and play.

As I said before, it's about finding the right balance.

We've heard from a number of people who have expressed objections to this proposal. Virtually every one of these objectors has indicated that they want us to deny these requested amendments. The reasons differed somewhat but, overwhelmingly they centred on the potential smell, potential contamination of the soil or the water or sewage systems and concerns about noise and unsightliness. I agree completely. These are all legitimate concerns and must be addressed satisfactorily.

One way to address them would be simply to do what virtually every complainant has asked of us - deny the request. While that is certainly within our rights, I believe that it would be unfair to the applicant because these are potential risks. Unless we have compelling evidence of their probability, this would remind me too much of Way #2 to Kill a Community.

Perhaps it's because I'm a middle child, but I like to find ways to enable all parties to get along. I have some experience with negotiations and most of it involved a technique called IBN, Interested Based Negotiation, in which all parties identify the issues that they feel need to be addressed then representatives of these parties come up with possible solutions which address all the issues, not just their own.

So, in the case we have before us, we have an applicant who wishes to establish a legitimate business of a type that most of the citizens of this town require for their meat-eating purposes. The business will employ people, will pay municipal taxes, there will almost certainly be other economic spin-offs and it would be consistent with the widely supported exhortation to Eat Local. We also have citizens who have legitimate concerns about this proposal. Mightn't there be a way to address these concerns and approve the amendments? Rather than viewing this as an either/or choice, a choice between an abattoir or an attractive town. Why not both? A Win - Win.

I have never been impressed with the NIMBY argument, rather, I don't expect any citizen to accept any of the consequences of my decisions as a councillor, that I wouldn't be prepared to accept myself. So, rather than "Not In My Back Yard", I propose "not unless I'd be prepared to have it in my backyard" or, in this case, within 100 metres of my back yard.

I have done some homework and I've learned that an abattoir can exist without major issue in other communities. It is my understanding that, in order for the business owner to get the required license to operate, he will have to comply with many Department of Health regulations which should ensure that most of the concerns will be adequately addressed. As I understand it, there are regulations about how the business operates and how the waste is handled so as to avoid smell and contamination. But, we don't have to rely on "my understanding". We will have in place a development agreement that requires that these conditions be met and, if they are not, then the project will

not go ahead and, if the abattoir is already in operation and the conditions of the agreement are violated and not remedied, then we will have the authority to deny them the right to continue to operate.

My support for the requested amendments before us is conditional on assurances that our development agreement has been drafted so that neighbouring businesses and residents can be free from noxious smells and unreasonable noise, that neither the soil nor the water & sewage systems will be adversely affected, that the "yucky" stuff will happen indoors and finally, if the development agreement is violated, that the town will have the authority to enforce compliance or, as a last resort, deny the right for the abattoir to continue to operate.

As in many cases involving freedom, one party's freedom gets limited when it starts to interfere with the freedom of others. In this case, I believe that we can ensure that all parties can have the "lawful enjoyment their property". So, to repeat, I am prepared to support these amendments, if I can be assured that the resulting "yucky" stuff (as with our handling of sewage) happens innocuously and does not jeopardize the quality of life that we currently enjoy.