

Margaret Van Volkenburg

■ Beechwood Ave., Guelph, ON ■

Thursday, August 28, 2025

Re: To amend the zoning by-law
343 Waterloo Ave, Guelph, ON.
File # OZS25-009

Dear Mayor Guthrie and Members of Guelph City Council,

I am writing to you today regarding the redevelopment application for 343 Waterloo Ave, specifically the strong mayor powers that are being used for this application. I had previously written to council on July 17/25 of my concerns surrounding the use of these powers and given what has happened since that July 22nd meeting, my concerns seem to be well-founded.

Our neighbourhood received the Notice of Meeting, dated July 2nd, which stated that the council meeting was scheduled to begin at 6pm on July 22nd. I went online to watch the council meeting at 6pm only to discover that the meeting had started at 5pm and the application had been passed. Later that evening, I learned that one of my neighbours had gone to the council meeting for 6pm. He intended to speak to the matter and was surprised that it had started an hour earlier.

The following morning (July 23rd), I called the City Clerk's office to enquire about the timing of the council meeting. After being put on hold, I was told someone would call me that day or the next. I called again on July 25th and sent an e-mail to the Clerk's office on this date as well. It wasn't until July 29th that I received a phone call from the Deputy Clerk, Garrett Meads, who confirmed that the 6pm meeting time was an error and in fact the meeting was scheduled for 5pm. He could not provide me with any information on how this happened or if this error would be corrected.

Richard Vivian from Guelph Today, our local online media outlet, wrote an article on July 30th highlighting the issue. Mayor Guthrie referred to the error in the meeting time as an "administrative issue" and that he only learned of the issue the morning of July 30th. The City Clerk's office was first alerted of the issue on July 23rd, so I don't know why the mayor wasn't informed until July 30th. With all due respect to the mayor, this was more than an administrative error. Members of this community wanted to speak to this issue and had that right to do so as outlined in the Planning Act. He never acknowledged this right or apologized for our community being excluded from the proceedings. His remarks appeared to dismiss our right to participate in the process.

The application is now coming back to council for review but this time the meeting is scheduled for 1pm. The first meeting was scheduled during a time when people were enjoying summer holidays, and this meeting is scheduled when most people have work commitments. It leaves our community with the impression that the mayor doesn't want to foster community involvement on this application.

At the July 22nd council meeting, a few of the councillors made mention that they were uncomfortable with the use of the strong mayor powers. I hope that at this council meeting, more councillors will agree that this process has been rushed and decide to vote against the application. I encourage council to take a step back and let the redevelopment of 343 Waterloo Ave. go through the regular planning process that involves both Planning staff and the community.

Several of my neighbours from Beechwood, Chadwick and Hearn will be writing to council and/or speaking at the September 3rd council meeting to address some real concerns about this application. I hope that you give their concerns serious consideration. I also think that the mayor and council should offer their apologies to the community for leaving them out of the process and acknowledge the vital role that citizens play in the decisions of local government.

Yours respectfully,

Margaret Van Volkenburg