

**Item 15.1 Report from Suzanne Craig, Integrity Commissioner, dated March 4, 2024, titled "Formal Code of Conduct Complaint #01191023 Investigation Report of Committee of Adjustment Member John Li"**

My name is Gary Zikovitz. My wife Michelle and I have lived in Richmond Hill for almost 45 years.

I have known John Li off and on for the past four years. I may not always agree with John's methods. However, I do know that John is well intentioned and that he has the ability to conduct detailed research. He does not accept things on face value.

I also know that, as a founding member of A Better Richmond Hill, John was committed to helping ensure that Richmond Hill voters chose the right candidates in the last municipal election. I personally believe that the Council we have today is a dramatic improvement over our previous Council.

I cannot comment on the specific circumstances that led to the Integrity Commissioner conducting an investigation of John's actions - except to say that I find this to be highly unusual. Now that COA hearings are no longer available for the public to see I have no way of knowing what really happened. What I can speak to is the **probable root cause** of whatever negative interactions may have occurred between City staff, other members of the COA; and John.

I am convinced that the root cause is the contentious Richmond Hill minor variance approval process that leads to the approval of minor variance applications contrary to Section 45(1) of the Planning Act. Staff reports used to guide COA decision making are clearly one-sided in favour of the applicant and never mention Official Plan development compatibility criteria. I along with others have repeatedly advised senior City officials and certain members of Council of these concerns. Unfortunately, this situation has never been addressed. If this situation had been properly addressed then, in all likelihood, whatever internal COA controversy that subsequently occurred would likely never have happened.

From direct personal experience I found the City staff, who control and defend Richmond Hill's questionable minor variance approval process, to

be extremely frustrating to deal with. The entire process lacks **credibility, fairness and transparency**. Having read John's study report I can see that what John has learned from his inside perspective, as a member of the COA, aligns with what I and others were able to learn from the outside. The main problem here is not John. I believe John was trying to be part of the solution even though he may have not gone about it in the right way.

Using John as a scapegoat for all that is wrong with Richmond Hill's minor variance approval process will not solve the root cause of the concerns that John and many others have raised. Back in May of 2022, after numerous frustrating interactions with the staff who control Richmond Hill's minor variance approval process, I sent an email to Commissioner Kwan, outlining many of my concerns and asking him to take action to correct how minor variances were being approved in Richmond Hill. I suggested this needed to be done prior to the appointment and training of new COA members for the Committee's next term. Unfortunately, nothing was done.

Removing a member of the COA who is challenging the validity of the Richmond Hill's questionable minor variance approval process will not solve the real problem. It may even perpetuate it.

Richmond Hill residents deserve a COA process that is **credible, fair and transparent**. Other municipalities have this ... why can't we?

Prepared by: Gary Zikovitz, 44 Penwick Crescent, Richmond Hill

Date: March 25, 2024