

Newmarket Era

Newmarket considers hiring integrity commissioner

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Integrity is back on the agenda at Newmarket council. Regional Councillor John Taylor received full support from all members of council when it came to directing staff to retain an integrity commissioner to investigate the possibility of a breach of confidentiality and the code of conduct by Ward 6 Councillor Maddie Di Muccio this week. The next step is for town staff to retain an integrity commissioner and provide him or her with the information needed to conduct the investigation, CAO Bob Shelton confirmed.

"We need to do our homework and set the parameters of the investigation before we can come up with an estimated cost," he added. This is not the first time the idea of retaining an integrity commissioner has come before council this term. In March, council considered one to investigate conflict between Ms Di Muccio and the Newmarket Library Board. The CAO wouldn't estimate the cost of this investigation, but a probe into the library board incident, alleging Ms Di Muccio was posting inaccurate information about a meeting on her blog, would have cost taxpayers \$20,000 to \$30,000. The funds needed for the investigation will be drawn from one of the town's legal reserves, Mr. Shelton said. By law, municipality have to offer the public or councillors methods to call for an investigation when they believe a public issue is being discussed behind closed doors, Mr. Shelton explained.

While some municipalities hired an integrity commissioner on a full-time basis, Newmarket decided to retain the services of a third party to investigate on a case-by-case basis. Even though council amended its code of conduct earlier this year, leaving councillors to sort out conflicts between each other without using town staff or resources, this incident would be considered a statutory complaint and is not restricted under the bylaw, council's legal adviser, George Rust-D'Eye, said. The investigation will be focused on whether or not Ms Di Muccio breached confidentiality law or the code of conduct by speaking publicly about a closed-door discussion regarding the renaming of a town field to honour a Toronto lacrosse player who died in Newmarket. Staff aims to get the investigation under way within the next two to three weeks.

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