

■ GREY HIGHLANDS

Talisman advisory meetings can be closed to public

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Meetings of the recently formed Talisman advisory task force don't have to be open to the public, said Grey Highlands chief administrative officer Dan Best.

Officials in the office of the provincial ombudsman confirmed that the task force doesn't meet the definition of a committee of council and therefore isn't bound by the provisions of the Ontario Municipal Act, Best said in a news release.

To qualify as a committee at least half of the task force members would have to be councillors or members of other local boards. That isn't the case. Members of the seven-person committee were chosen from the community at large. None are members of council.

"As the task force does not meet the definition of committee as outlined in Section 238 of the Municipal Act 2001, the rules of open meetings do not apply in this case," Best said.

Best noted that even if the task force qualified as a committee of council it would still be subject to the same provisions of the Municipal Act as council which permits meetings to be closed for a number of reasons including proposed or pending acquisition or disposal of property and advice that is subject solicitor-client privilege.

Best noted that the task force is required to keep minutes of its meetings and forward them to council for review. And that's where the public will get some idea of the workings of the task force.

"That is where the transparency of the process is (with council)," he said.

The goal of the seven-member committee is to review, research and make recommendations on how to dispose of the Talisman property or come up with ideas on how to develop the former resort now that it's owned by the municipality.

The first meeting of the task force is scheduled for Dec. 13.