

Delegation - Proposed Tree Protection and Enhancement Policy (RPF-01-22)

Good morning

My name is Leslie Barbetta and I'm here today representing Active Community Teamwork (ACT) neighbourhood association, as well as in a personal capacity. I'd like to begin by thanking the Forestry Department for their hard work in drafting this Policy and the Private Tree By-law. We chose to live in the Shoreacres neighbourhood in large part because of the mature trees. They are a source of pride and joy, and as their "caretakers", we have been rewarded in return by their beauty. There are also occasions where these pillars of the community create challenges and over the last few years, we've called on our Councillor and the Forestry Dept for assistance in addressing some of those concerns. We have learned a great deal as a result of these interactions and our own research. Today I'd like to speak to the Policy's four categories of activities for a healthy urban forest, and highlight the partnership role that a community group can play in supporting this Policy by identifying some successes and areas of concern:

Preserve and Protect

- The City shall support the preservation of trees by:
 - ▶ exploring all feasible options for retaining a viable tree before deciding to remove it;
 - ▶ requiring that opportunities to preserve trees are considered through the development process for public and private lands;
 - ▶ requiring special consideration for significant trees;
 - ▶ generally refusing requests for tree removal based solely on reasons related to aesthetics or other similar factors;

Questions/Comments:

- *Please identify when permission has been granted to remove a tree! It's no exaggeration to state that the sound of a chainsaw sends a shiver up our backs and a flurry of texts or emails between neighbours about why a tree is coming down.*
- *What is the level of concern in Forestry that Arborists' Reports may sometimes be "skewed" in favour of development plans? It is thought that some experts will support whichever narrative they are being paid to support*
- *Within the significant tree description, would also like to see the inclusion of unique or underrepresented or endangered species (including non-native varieties)*

Maintain and Monitor

- The City shall:
 - ▶ provide guidance to private property owners with respect to current trends in urban forest health and best management practices;

Questions/Comments:

- *Please elaborate on what this guidance would entail. We have witnessed homeowners take “maintenance” of mature trees into their own hands, impacting the tree’s aesthetics, and comprising its health & safety, as well as their own personal safety. We often hear rumblings that some property owners have taken to “poisoning” their trees, in an effort to weaken them and ultimately circumvent some of the time and expense involved with the Private Tree By-law.*
- *In supporting all efforts to protect our tree canopy, we recognize that there are occasional unique circumstances where City trees cause unintentional problems for homeowners, particularly with mature trees in established neighbourhood. When these situations arise, we would like to ensure there is an opportunity to work with Staff towards a solution or reasonable compromise because complicated situations cannot always be resolved over email or by citing Policy & By-law.*

Establish, Replace and Enhance

- The City shall support proper tree establishment by:
 - ▶ supporting tree planting initiatives of all scales on public and private properties with volunteers and partners as opportunities arise;
- The City shall work to ensure the urban forest and tree canopy are sustained and enhanced by:
 - ▶ implementing a plan for replacement where trees are removed on public and private lands;
 - ▶ encouraging tree replacement on-site but evaluating the possibilities for off-site tree replacements, in part or in whole, where the compensation cannot be accommodated on site and where feasible alternative locations are identified.

Questions/Comments:

- *Within our community group, there are individuals who have volunteered to not only help identify private lands that would benefit from new or restorative planting, but assist with the physical planting effort as well. Sometimes the only thing that prevents these opportunities on private lands is lack of awareness of the issue*
- *Where new development results in loss of trees and and ultimately loss of privacy on adjacent lands, allow for replacement plantings on **those** properties.*

Engage and Collaborate

- The City shall actively pursue opportunities to engage with members of the community and external partners to promote proper tree establishment and care, including use of incentives as appropriate.
- The City shall collaborate with existing and new partners to increase its capacity to establish and enhance the urban forest on public and private lands.
- The City is committed to employing communication methods and tools that are transparent, and to providing accurate information in a clear and concise manner that is also accessible.

Questions/Comments:

- *We support any effort to work with community groups to assist with tree canopy goals. As a result of establishing connections with the Forestry dept, we have been able to achieve the following: share details about the City's Tree Planting Program; answer our members' questions about Forestry practices, saving staff time; when we don't have the answer, we will forward those queries, which has a twofold benefit: helps to streamline the communication process and then share the response with a wider audience, and helps foster relationships between Forestry staff and one or two primary neighbourhood contacts*
- *To share a recent success story, our community was recently given the opportunity to select a new tree for the neighbourhood that will symbolically honour several community-minded residents who are no longer with us. I cannot express how much this meant to some people. Such a simple example of the good that can happen when a City and its residents work together.*
- *Speaking to the communication & transparency component, a recent inquiry through the CRM platform informed us that the City does not bear responsibility for a particular tree matter. A By-law was cited, however this information does not appear to be available on the City's website without doing a records request.*
- *ACT can arrange engagement opportunities between Forestry and our community to assist in the educational component of our By-laws and Protection Policy,*

With common goals, shared resources, and an open line of communication, there are many opportunities for ACT to work in partnership with Forestry - and any City department for that matter. Thank you for your time today, I'd be happy to take any questions.