

Council vote is ?ironic?

It's ironic that King Township proudly proclaims that "King loves its trees," yet by a vote of 6-1 council chose to not implement a proposed tree by-law that would have prevented further random destruction of mature trees in its three settlement areas. Council's reasoning could be understood if the draft bylaw had been onerous and restrictive in nature but by current tree bylaw standards, this document was anything but. It was specifically designed to encourage landowners within the villages to have second thoughts if they were considering removing mature trees.

If, after careful consideration, they chose to remove the tree(s), for each tree removed, there would be a requirement of three replacement trees measuring 5 to 7 centimetres diameter at breast height (DBH). This rule reflects current Township practice with its publicly owned trees.

The proposed bylaw was most liberal in that there was to be no permit fee and no charge for the services of a certified arborist to determine if a tree was ailing or dying and exempt from the three to one replacement rule. The aim was to protect healthy, mature trees from wanton destruction and to maintain and grow the overall canopy of Township trees.

I believe council made the decision they did because of a small, but very vocal group of residents who object to the by-law, not because they are opposed to the protection of trees but simply because they feel no one has the right to tell them what they can do on their own properties. They are obviously forgetting that there are existing bylaws covering other issues that dictate what they can do and what they cannot do. It's shocking that council allowed the greater good to be sacrificed simply to appease these short-sighted individuals.

Both Vaughan and Newmarket have new tree bylaws. These communities have belatedly recognized that trees are important to our wellbeing and are at least attempting to mitigate the damage caused by rampant development.

Unfortunately, King Township, which has become a centre of rampant development itself, has not. Instead of waiting like these communities to rectify the damage after the fact, King might have had the foresight to enact the legislation beforehand.

Mike Shackleford