

Measures needed to address speeding across King Township

By Mark Pavilons

A discussion at King council on stop signs led to a full blown debate on speeding and traffic calming measures across the municipality.

As councillors discussed the need for all-way stop signs in a couple of locations, the bigger picture emerged ? something has to be done to curb speeding on streets and roads.

The Township is in the midst of reviewing its transportation policies and a few local hot spots brought the issue to the forefront.

Council approved putting up an all-way stop at the intersection of Elizabeth Grove and Patton Street in King City.

This spot has been notorious for speeding, and Councillor Jordan Cescolini asked staff to look into the all-way stop. Such measures are at the discretion of the municipality and staff agreed with the move.

Staff said there have been speeding and traffic volume issues in this area, as a result of the expansion of the GO station. The matter was exacerbated after a no-through prohibition on Burton Grove at Keele, back in 2014.

Traffic counter devices were set up on Elizabeth Grove, but results didn't indicate a speeding problem. The data didn't support the warrants required for an all-way stop under Ontario Traffic Manual (OTM) guidelines.

Staff sided with the residents on this one.

It has been advocated by residents through observation, that an all-way stop condition may be beneficial during peak traffic periods, including providing greater gaps in traffic along Patton Street for safer ingress/egress from local driveways. Additionally, during peak periods it has been alleged by members of the public that Elizabeth Grove eastbound left turns onto Patton substantively cut the northwest corner during the rush, which then forces southbound right turning vehicles on Patton Street to stop well short of the stop sign, creating an unsafe condition, staff noted.

Staff also said this area has become an ?unofficial bypass? to the core during peak periods. The bottom line is the all-way stop, along with the painted bars, will help improve safety at the intersection based on public opinion.

A local resident said the Township needs to be proactive and this area presents terrible dangers for pedestrians. Children's safety should come first, she said.

Some residents also called for speed reductions on the streets. Another called for increased police presence in the community.

Councillor Cescolini said many parents are concerned and the all-way stop is part of the solution.

Councillor Avia Eek encouraged residents to file online complaints with York Regional Police. They will respond and visit the area to clamp down on infractions.

Mayor Steve Pellegrini stressed that speeding is the number one issue throughout the township. The safety of our kids is paramount, he observed. He even likes the idea of using a decommissioned police cruiser stationed at strategic points as a deterrent. YRP, he noted, is receptive to any form of deterrent. The mayor praised the speed humps on Patricia and Burton Grove as being effective and he said we need a consultative approach and plan across the municipality.

Councillor Bill Cober said residents should know that council and staff are serious about this issue. He said more measures will come in the spring of 2020.

Rural stop sign

Councillor Jakob Schneider pressed council in supporting an all-way stop at the intersection of another trouble spot ? 16th Sideroad and 10th Concession. Again, the area did not meet the warrant and stop signs are not recommended for speed control.

However, concern and several near misses at the spot prompted staff and council to approve the all-way stop.

Staff reported that manual traffic counts were done during the week of Aug. 9 and results didn't show volumes were substantive.

Although the ongoing traffic analysis has not indicated a need for stop signs at the 16th Sideroad (northerly) and 10th Concession, some residents of the area continue to request their installation, staff pointed out.

They suggested the all-way stop be implemented on a trial basis.

Former councillor Linda Pabst pointed out large farm machinery uses these roads and speeding is a concern. We want to keep our

roads safe, and keep the speeds down," she said. Stop signs will prompt motorists to at least slow down. She even asked staff to consider stop signs on the 11th all the way from King Road to Highway 9.

Schneider told councillors he was in a collision in that area while driving farm equipment and he's witnessed several close calls. The need is obvious, he said, pointing out rural areas need the same traffic consideration. "This is still an agricultural community," he observed.

Cober agreed the 11th is a commuter route and he wanted staff to monitor traffic on the 8th Concession as well.

Mayor Pellegrini said simply putting up stop signs across the township isn't the way to go. Council needs expert advice before making drastic traffic changes. He wants to know whether stop signs are the traffic calming measures best suited to address the issue.

"Let's look at this holistically," he said.

The mayor has historically criticized local motorists for speeding in their own back yards. He once again pointed to a lack of respect for the rules of the road across King.

"This is your community, slow down," he said.

Schneider asked staff how soon they begin to review and evaluate the trouble spots and staff noted it would take a couple of months.