

Council updates paving plan, includes gravel road forecasts

By Mark PavilonsEditor

King is ahead of the game when it comes to paving its road network. For some residents, upgrades to their roads can't come soon enough. Councillors discussed the roads capital project update with some last-minute additions. Councillor Jakob Schneider wanted staff to create a separate schedule for the remaining 64 kilometres of King's gravel roads. This will let residents know where they stand on a timeline for scheduled improvements. Two 17th Sideroad residents asked that priority be given to a small, two-kilometre stretch. Andrew Brown said similar nearby portions of road and he's disappointed this piece isn't included in King's short-term schedule. The dust-suppressing used on gravel in the summer is not effective, he said, and he wanted this portion included in the paving schedule. Linda Lord agreed, noting it's a very hilly section and paving would improve the road greatly. Samantha Fraser, King's public works director, said their 10-year strategy is data-driven, based on traffic and usage. She added visual surveys are conducted of every road to determine the priority. One of the reasons why the 17th was not identified was it hosts lower through traffic levels. This road also requires a full reconstruction, and they can't just put a layer of asphalt on top. King's roads needs assessment is updated every two years, and a new one is coming shortly. Mayor Steve Pellegrini asked staff if they could extend their schedule beyond the 10-year time frame. He also pointed out that King has paved more roads in the past three years than it has in the past 30. They've accelerated the paving program. The mayor noted money for some road improvements comes from the development charges fund, paid for by developers. Using this money saves taxpayers' dollars. Fraser added King is actually ahead of the game and ahead of its own schedule. They took advantage of great contract prices provided by contractors, to stretch their funds. Schneider asked for the separate gravel road strategy to come back to council for approval. Mayor Pellegrini also wanted community consultation. He did note that traffic, by nature, will take motorists everywhere and with mobile GPS, shortcuts are found everywhere. He mentioned that aside from the gravel roads, some paved stretches are in awful condition and need attention. He said the Township is trying to be fair across the board and he knows from experience that not all residents agree on paving all the gravel roads. Fraser said the strategy provides the best value and promotes the longest life for King roads. Councillor David Boyd initially thought Schneider's motion would pit residents against one another for priority and he didn't want to skew the original strategy. Fraser said it would not impact the overall strategic, mostly because funding for gravel and paved roads comes from two different sources. Staff will provide the two separate strategies. Councillor Bill Cober said this will be a valuable tool moving forward. Road improvements aren't biased, and there's no division between rural and urban needs. Roads identified for upgrades in the budget his year include Kettleby Road and almost 4 kilometres of Woodchopper's Lane. It also includes the 18th Sideroad, from Concession 7 to .38 kilometres east. Diana Drive will a reconstruction, as will portions of the 17th. Funds for some of these will come from the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund. While council had previously asked for work to be done on the 11th Concession, staff said the portion between Highway 9 and the 19th will be removed from this year's schedule.