

Councillor wants 'heritage district' for Schomberg

By Mark PavilonsEditor

King will look into developing a 'Heritage Conservation District Plan' for Schomberg. Councillor Mary Asselstine presented the motion at council Monday night and members of the public were largely in favour of the move. Asselstine noted that Schomberg has 22 listed heritage properties, and a minimum of 52 properties on the Built Heritage Inventory, located within the village along Main Street and Church Street, in and adjacent to the village core. Her motion noted protecting these heritage resources 'to the greatest extent' as they are important to residents and the Township. 'These cultural heritage resources enrich our traditions, contribute to quality of life and create a sense of place in Schomberg,' the motion noted. 'These cultural heritage resources are a limited resource, and once the resource is depleted, it cannot be recovered. Schomberg's unique character and identity is linked to its heritage and the village core 'contributes to a unique opportunity and environment for business, residents and tourists.' The Main Street is the focus of many different community events and activities that showcase the unique character and identity of Schomberg to local residents and tourists. These community events draw benefit from the unique character and identity of the village core. The motion also states that King's Official Plan states that it is the policy of council to consider establishing Heritage Conservation Districts in the Township's Villages and Hamlets subject to the completion of Heritage Conservation Districts Studies and Plans. Resident after resident, many of whom have lived in Schomberg for decades, support the idea of protecting the precious heritage resources and the legacy of the village. One woman, however, said the label 'heritage' can bring negative results. She said properties are 'prejudiced' by financial institutions where there is a heritage designation. The motion is asking Planning Division Staff to prepare a report to review the benefits and feasibility to undertake the preparation of a Heritage Conservation District Plan (HCD) for Schomberg focusing on the area in and adjacent to the Village Core. Included in the report will be timing and cost estimates, including the staff resources required. Asselstine added it's just this public perspective she's looking for, as staff move forward on the feasibility study. She sees 'exciting opportunities' ahead for all owners and tenants on Main Street. Councillor Debbie Schaefer said the staff report is 'exploratory.' Councillor Jennifer Anstey asked staff if they can look into impacts of the designation on mortgage and insurance rates. Mayor Steve Pellegrini said he wants to ensure the majority of the public favours the move, so he asked staff for a consultative approach. Staff noted there's not enough time for a full public consultation given the timelines, but they can contact heritage homeowners in Schomberg and a forum can be posted on SpeaKING website. 'I want to know where people stand on this,' he said. Hopes are staff can report back to council by Oct. 30, so that council can decide whether a Schomberg Heritage Conservation District project should be considered as part of the 2024 budget process.