

Residents say draft tree bylaw is restrictive

By **Angela Gismondi**

King Township wants to put a tree preservation bylaw in place but residents are worried the proposed bylaw is too restrictive. The draft bylaw was brought forward at a Committee of the Whole meeting Monday in an effort to gain public input. The purpose of the bylaw is to grow the tree canopy in the Township, but local residents argued the bylaw infringed on their right to maintain their own property if they need to get permission from the town for every single tree they cut down.

The matter was first introduced a few years ago by the King Environmental Advisory Committee in response to the development taking place in King's villages. The intent was to prevent developers from clear-cutting woodlots and trees on their property without first consulting the Township. As it stands, the bylaw would only apply to the more urbanized areas of the Township, not the rural areas.

The staff report outlined the proposed process for obtaining a permit. A property owner wishing to remove a tree will contact the bylaw enforcement department to request a permit. A staff member will then attend the property to assess the tree, discuss alternatives to removal, determine replacement requirements, and issue the permit. No fee would be charged for the permit. The staff member will not deny the issuance of a permit unless the tree is protected under other legislation or removing it would be an environmental hazard. The property owner would then conduct the work by a certain date, after which the staff member would return to inspect the work. Of course, to ensure the tree is removed by a certain date, it might be worth contacting a company that is experienced in effectively removing trees. Depending on the size of the tree, it can be difficult to get the tree down and off the site, that's why it's often better to call a company offering [tree removal jacksonville fl](#) services, or another company closer to your site. This should ensure that the tree is removed safely and promptly. If the property owner elects to pay cash-in-lieu to plant one or more trees elsewhere, staff will issue the permit after collecting the cash-in-lieu payment. If a property owner removes a tree without applying for a permit or in violation of an issued permit, they may be subject to a fine and be required to remediate the lands at their expense.

Local resident Christopher Freeman was worried about the costs of implementing a bylaw of this nature.

"The draft bylaw is going to end up like death by 1,000 cuts if every single tree has to go through an administrative process," he explained, adding that the Township would have to hire full time staff to deal with all the requests which will result in increased fees.

"If you want to cut down trees, it shouldn't be an administrative exercise, it's a matter of common sense," he said.

He suggested that it would be more appropriate for the Township to use the Aurora tree bylaw model, which allows property owners to cut down four trees per 12-month period.

He pointed out that sometimes there are good reasons for the removal of trees including if a tree is diseased or if it outgrows the area in which it is planted.

Uli Retsch said he was upset when he read the proposed bylaw.

"I am very much in favour of protecting the environment but I think this is an unwelcome intrusion on personal property management," he said.

He was also concerned about the timing of the bylaw, since the GTA was hit by a major ice storm in December and Township residents need adequate time to clean up the damaged trees on their properties.

"My suggestion would be to shelf this bylaw for a while and quietly forget about it," he said. "Engage creativity, be really green and help people plant trees."