

Council eliminates cul-de-sac islands from Noble Ridge subdivision

By Angela Gismondi

Residents living on James Bowman Court in the new Noble Ridge subdivision in Nobleton don't want an island in the middle of their cul-de-sac.

Township staff brought forward a report at this past Monday's committee of the whole meeting recommending that the residents' request to eliminate the cul-de-sac island on James Bowman Court be denied and that the developer be directed to install the islands with enhanced landscaping features. But the majority of council didn't agree with the recommendation and decided to eliminate all six cul-de-sac islands proposed for the subdivision.

The installation of cul-de-sac islands was part of the development design criteria for the subdivision. The proposal was to provide for a lane width of 6.2 metres around the outer perimeter of the cul-de-sac to provide on-street parking and one lane of traffic.

In July 2012, residents from James Bowman Court contacted the Township's engineering and public works department with concerns about the proposed size of the cul-de-sac island, specifically that the proposed lane width did not provide enough clearance for on-street parking and sufficient clearance for getting in and out of driveways for the houses directly on the cul-de-sac. They were also concerned that with the cul-de-sac, the road would not be wide enough for emergency vehicles and snow plows.

Staff and the developer's consultants reviewed the cul-de-sac island design and revised the lane width to 8.5 metres to address the residents' concerns. Despite the modified design, staff received a petition requesting the elimination of the proposed cul-de-sac island in James Bowman Court.

Domenic Mula made a deputation to committee Monday.

"There are 19 kids on our court," explained Mula. "It's a cul-de-sac so we don't have to worry about speeders and traffic and none of us want to. It's not a busy place and we like it like that. We live in a nice neighbourhood and we want to keep it that way."

Aside from causing a visual distraction and making it difficult to see where children are playing, the island would also collect garbage and the vegetation would become overgrown. Furthermore, he pointed out that all the snow this winter was piled up in the centre of the court but with an island there that wouldn't be possible.

"It would make it more dangerous," said Mula. "I don't see the benefit and neither do any of my neighbours. It's not safe."

Councillor Debbie Schaefer asked Mula if the island was included in the drawings he saw when he bought the house.

"It's an engineered drawing," Mula responded. "I was promised a lot of things. The drawings showed a tree in front of my house but there's no tree."

Tanja Mirazic was primarily concerned about visibility and safety but she was also concerned that the island would not be maintained. She said the maintenance levels to date have not been great.

"All you have to do is take a look at the pond," she said. "Are you going to guarantee that this island is going to beautify my street?"

Staff explained the subdivision has not yet been assumed by the Township and therefore the maintenance is still the responsibility of the developer.

John Petrocelli agreed with his neighbours.

"I'm requesting that we get rid of something that nobody wants," said Petrocelli, adding he has not been kept informed about whether or not the island is going in and he only found out about the meeting late last week. "Our children use that as a playground and now we're going to have to tell them they can't play there anymore because it's going to be changed. Save your money and put it towards something else."

He added that streets with cul-de-sacs are usually larger but this street is standard size.

"It's not appropriate for a small court," said Petrocelli. "You're going to have to landscape those every year and with what's been the upkeep in that subdivision I'm kind of worried."

The Noble Ridge subdivision has five cul-de-sacs in addition to James Bowman Court. Eva Sergnese, a resident on a neighbouring court, said an island is not wanted there either. She started a petition on the weekend and said if she had more time, she would have collected more signatures. Aside from the court being small already, there is an entrance to the parkette on the street so there is a lot of pedestrian traffic and an island might obstruct the view.

Local Councillor Peter Grandilli said he understood the residents' concerns.

"I do understand and I know that these subdivisions were built with the intention of islands on the courts, but at the same time, people who live on these courts don't want it," said Grandilli. "It seems like they don't serve much of a purpose and are an inconvenience to most of the residents. If they don't want them, why should we impose it on them? I think we should agree with the

residents and have these removed and use the money somewhere else.?

Rob Flindall, director of engineering for the Township, explained that the main purpose of the islands is to enhance the subdivision's visual appeal and the upscale nature of it. In response to the residents' concerns surrounding landscaping the island, he said a tall tree might cause less of a visual distraction than low shrubs.

Mayor Steve Pellegrini was concerned about the amount of maintenance the island will require. In terms of cost, it is anticipated to be in the range of \$6,000 to \$10,000 which includes only for the day-to-day required maintenance (mainly weeding) but does not include pre-season design, planting, materials, watering or installation.

Down the road that centre island will become a service nightmare for us in terms of maintenance,? said Pellegrini adding the Township needs to approach the developer and ask for cash-in-lieu to put in a reserve for future maintenance in the subdivision. ?I would support having these removed.?

CAO Susan Plamondon informed council the Township received correspondence from the developer asking that any discussion surrounding the financial contribution be deferred to the next meeting.

Councillor Bill Cober was curious to know where the developer stands on the matter.

?We have had discussions with the developer,? explained Flindall. ?They are more than happy not to install them but there has been some resistance on the dollar amount and that will require some discussion. We will be coming back with a further report.?

Councillor Cleve Mortelliti brought up some valid points. He recalled the existing community's opposition to the subdivision in its early stages and the extensive public process that the developer and the community went through to get the subdivision built.

?I have to think that these landscaped islands came out of that debate,? said Mortelliti, adding that although the removal of the islands may be with the Noble Ridge residents want, it doesn't represent the rest of the community. ?We went through an extensive public process that landed on this and we want to be cautious in deleting it.?

He also questioned if the road meets the Township's standards without the cul-de-sac.

?If the road doesn't have the proper depth, we are going to assume a road that is substandard,? Mortelliti pointed out. ?My own comfort level is not there yet in terms of eliminating these. I want to know what's underneath these cul-de-sacs before we remove them and make sure there is a proper road base.?

Flindall said he would look into that and suggested that if the developer built it in a way meant for a cul-de-sac, that council include a provision for the developer to bring the road up to standard.

Council put forward a motion to direct the developer to eliminate the six cul-de-sac islands from the Noble Ridge subdivision, with the condition that the developer provide proper substructure of the road if it's not already there and to defer the matter of financial contribution from the developer to the next meeting. The motion carried.