

King drafting new clean yards bylaw

By Mark Pavilons

King Township has a reputation to uphold.

Part of that image is looking our best.

Township staff are putting the finishing touches on an updated Clean Yards Bylaw.

In her presentation to council recently, deputy clerk Nancy Cronsberry said they identified concerns and solutions when reviewing their property standards rules. The proposed clean bylaw maintains pertinent provisions and adds some new ones.

Once completed, the new set of standards will be "clear and fair" to all residents, she said.

Mayor Steve Pellegrini said he's heard of issues surrounding corner lots and what he referred to as offensive lighting.

Councillor Avia Eek was particularly pleased with the coming bylaw, as property standards issues have been a concern in her ward. She's received many calls about messy properties, debris discarded or accumulated on properties, old cars, equipment accumulated on properties, and generally, properties that could be mistaken for dumps or refuse heaps, and general collection of junk.

The public is invited to provide their comments, before the final bylaw returns to council for approval July 11.

When it comes to enforcement and fines, Cronsberry said Township staff always try to work with residents and help them solve the problems, before resorting to tougher actions.

In drafting the new bylaw, staff are looking at more effective and efficient ways of managing "nuisance" and property standards issues in a prompt and timely fashion.

"It is recognized that property related issues have a direct impact on residents within our community, often creating conflict and nuisance as well as affecting the enjoyment and value of their properties," according to Cronsberry's report. A stand-alone bylaw with clear provisions would help the municipality resolve property matters quickly.

Currently, some issues with properties can take 30 days to resolve and the public expects a more timely conclusion.

"Staff recognizes that in most instances, compliance is achieved following direct contact with the property owner."

Staff reviewed similar policies from other municipalities and combined King's own guidelines to draft the new bylaw. The Clean Yards Bylaw will replace the current Property Standards Bylaw (1998) used within the Building Code Act, and this way, Township staff can act more quickly.

The new bylaw brings together rules governing standing water, littering and noxious weeds. New provisions include rules for composting, firewood and parking vehicles. Staff believe these are reasonable and ensure "harmony in the community."

It's proposed that the keeping of firewood, composters and digestors be permitted, but there are conditions. King will also encourage property owners to help maintain grass on boulevards.

Homeowners are already required to clear the snow on sidewalks in front of their homes, but it's never been enforced.

Currently, keeping things like RVs and boats in the front yard is prohibited and staff are adding trailers to the list.

If staff are unable to get residents to comply, they can enforce fines, in the range of \$300.

"Staff concludes that a Clean Yards Bylaw is an effective tool for regulating exterior property maintenance within both the urban and rural areas."