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Clean Yards Bylaw now in force

By Mark Pavilons

King has a new bylaw governing property standards.

Council passed the Clean Yards bylaw Monday night, a new set of standards for staff to manage ?nuisance? and property standards issues in a prompt and timely fashion.

A 58-year resident spoke to councillors, stressing the need to enforce bylaw infractions, including trailers on properties and the amount of vehicles parked in driveways. He asked for a proactive approach to enforcement.

Councillor Cleve Mortelliti said this new bylaw goes a long way to address issues and concerns.

?It's a big step forward,??said Councillor David Boyd.

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. This stand-alone bylaw with clear provisions will help the municipality resolve property matters quickly.

After presenting the draft bylaw to council in May, staff made several changes.

They further defined ?public nuisance,? which takes into account frequency, intensity and duration of the activity. By including public nuisance provisions, staff can get a better handle on enforcement.

The new bylaw also contains provisions for dust, light and natural gardens.

Staff further detailed just how enforcement takes place, which includes a complaint process, visit by bylaw officers and fines.

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

In creating the new bylaw, 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.

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

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