

Environmental Sustainability Committee

Draft Minutes

Wednesday, October 05, 2016

Burgoyne Woods Room at 5pm

Attendance:

Councillor Dave Haywood (Chair), Councillor Jennie Stevens (Vice Chair), Peter Thompstone (Chair, Green Committee)

Staff: Jeffery Silcox-Childs, Manager of Parks, Trees and Cemetery Services

Regrets:

Councillor Matt Harris, Elaine Manocha (Chair, Clean City Committee)

Staff: Dave Wood, Fire Chief

Staff Liaisons:

Mike Anderson (Green Committee)

Pat Conway (Clean City Committee)

Julie Hughes, Pillar Committee, Recorder

Guest:

Sarah Fraser

1. **Call meeting to order:** Chair, Councillor Phillips
5pm

2. **Motion to approve the agenda**

That the ESC approve the agenda, as presented

Moved: J Stevens

Carried

3. **Motion to adopt the minutes of the previous meeting**

That the ESC minutes, July 6, 2016, be approved

Moved: P. Thompstone

Carried

4. Presentations

n/a

5. Business arising from the minutes, Jul 6

i) Update on tree submission ~ P. Thompson

- Acting director explained the new direction being pursued by staff to address the tree by law
- GC received assurance that their recommendations for trees on private property will be considered going forth

6. Business

6.1 Clean City Update ~ E Manocha

- Deferred due to E Manocha's absence

6.2 Green Committee update ~ P Thompson

i) Weather delayed a number of projects this summer

- Walker's Creek
 - hardscape in process but planting delayed until spring 2017
- Glendale (Bill Wiley Memorial Parkette)
 - Received \$10K (some in kind) donation from Walker Bros
 - Other amenities (lighting, sitting area and waste receptacles) are needed
- Lake/James/Welland park area
 - Design elements are being investigated
 - Fundraising to be pursued
- Eastchester and Bunting
 - Naturalization area to be established
 - Reviewing specific plantings appropriate for the challenging site conditions
- Canada 150 projects
 - Met with Canada 150 Task Force to co-ordinate projects
 - Red and white flower theme flower pot program to be pursued
 - More details to follow
- BME Church
 - Irrigation installed in the memorial garden
- Arboretum @ 360 Niagara Street
 - Inventory of trees carried out, some need pruning/replacing
 - Donation of trees from Niagara College being investigated
 - Chain link fencing which borders Niagara St removed
- Tree watering bags
 - GC purchased 200 from their budget for city trees

- ii) Recruitment
 - GC posting recruitment due to member moving out of town
- iii) Supporting a Health Tree Canopy and Modification to Wastewater Rates
 - See attached
 - Increasingly hot summers and drought conditions are threatening the city's tree canopy
 - Need to find a means to encourage residents to hydrate their trees
 - As all water used by residents is subject to sewer surcharges, the GC would like to motivate residents to water trees by recommending that the city adjust the wastewater portion of the water bill during summer months, along with an education program

That the update by the Green Committee be approved, as presented

Moved: J Stevens

Carried

7. Other business

i) Graffiti ~ P. Thompstone

- Increasing incidents of graffiti across city
- Request to Mayor and Communications to promote pingstreet over social media
- Mayor's office to report graffiti on "Welcome to Glenridge"

8. Directions/Follow ups

i) Chair Haywood to bring GC recommendations on "*Supporting a healthy tree canopy and modifications to wastewater rates*" to council to request a staff report

9. Date of next meeting

Wed January 18

5pm to 6pm

Ante Room

10. Motion to adjourn

That the ESC be adjourned at 6:00pm

Moved: P Thompstone

Carried

Green Advisory Committee Recommendation to City Council

Supporting a Healthy Tree Canopy and a Garden City Via Modification of Wastewater Rates

Premises:

- Droughts are predicted to become more frequent with the changes in climate. (source: Engineers Canada Public Infrastructure Environmental Vulnerability Committee Study of Welland)
- Tree canopies are particularly vulnerable to drought and heat impacts in a city.
- A tree canopy reduces energy consumption in the summer by lowering the ambient temperature.
- The City is endeavouring to double the current tree canopy within the urban zone.
- The City encourages conservation of water usage to protect the environment and reduce/manage sewage treatment. Billing is based on both supply of potable water and treatment of sewage wastewater.
- Water used for gardens does not require treatment as sewage.
- The current fixed-rate billing system for water/wastewater penalises citizens who are attempting to promote the image of 'The Garden City' by irrigating their plants.

One of the missions of the Green Advisory Committee (GAC) is to beautify St. Catharines and try to live up to its moniker 'The Garden City.' This summer's drought conditions placed great stress on all life but particularly on plants. Newly planted trees and shrubs require some additional water, often for several years until their root systems become well established. In a drought, even long established plants may require some irrigation just to survive. Green infrastructure (in particular, the tree canopy) helps to improve living conditions and human health by cooling the environment, reducing energy consumption, and protecting the hard infrastructure by improving pavement lifecycles.

The high cost of using municipal water (includes treating wastewater) reduces the likelihood that citizens will water boulevard trees. Those people who have planted their own trees and shrubs on their property are generally more likely to take action to preserve their investment by watering but may not take the same action for city-owned boulevard trees. As droughts become more frequent, planning to maintain the canopy is prudent.

This Advisory Committee recommends that a reduced rate for the residential sewage treatment component be considered during the growing season to encourage watering during dry periods.

Along with this, there should be an educational program to promote wise use of water to avoid frivolous and wasteful usage in the summer period.

In drought conditions, such as the City experienced this past summer, it should be possible to provide additional relief to encourage people to water their plants. The water would still cost the same but any additional water used for such irrigation would not require treatment as sewage, so the effect on the revenue stream would be nominal.

Many trees, especially young boulevard trees, were lost in 2016 through lack of water. Replacing the boulevard trees will have a significant impact on PRCS budgets (current cost is \$400 per tree) and will not contribute to a net gain in the city's tree canopy.

The GAC believes that people should be encouraged to use water wisely to prevent plant loss during periods of drought. The high cost of water is inadvertently leading to tree canopy loss, and the committee feels people should not be penalized for watering plants and, especially, helping to protect the city's tree canopy.

Submitted on behalf of the St. Catharines Green Advisory Committee,
Peter Thompstone, Chair; Peter Howes, Vice Chair
