

Council briefed on ?dangerous? invasive plant species

Written By PETER RICHARDSON

Monday night began with the presentation of no less than 11 Community Achievement Awards. Presented to Al Widbur, Althea Casamento, Brianne Ellis, Jeff McLean, Josh Atman, Sohayla Smith, Lesa Peat, The Little Family, Bob, Sue, Jeremy, Carola and Andrew, Randy Narine, Sue Peterson and Tricia Field, the awards signified their major and continuing contributions to the Shelburne community and life within it.

Each recipient was presented with a plaque and a medal, by Mayor Wade Mills.

Stormwater drainage channel approved

Following this, a committee of adjustment public meeting was convened to present a plan by Gott Enterprises Inc., to receive a consent application approval, for the creation of an easement to allow a stormwater drainage channel to be installed on 108 Prentice Drive.

This would gather the stormwaters and exit them to the existing drainage ditch along on County Road 11, 30 Sideroad.

After some discussion regarding preventing local children and adults from using the accompanying stormwater management pond, for a skating rink, Council approved the consent application. The committee of adjustment meeting was adjourned and the actual Council meeting started.

Phragmite Australis

The first item on the agenda, was a delegation from Mr. Ernie Lynch and his wife, Angela, concerning the enrichment of Phragmite Australis in the area wetlands and ditches.

This highly invasive species poses numerous problems, and, if left unchecked, can completely kill local plants and destroy habitat for land and water animals. The grass, can reach heights of 22 feet and has the potential to reach densities of 200 stems per square metre.

Not to be confused with native phragmites, this restricted grass is now listed in the Invasive Species Act of Ontario. Seed pods can contain 2,000 seeds, but the plant also reproduces through extensive and aggressive rhizomes (roots). The plant is also very difficult to destroy or contain.

Ernie spoke to the destruction of the plant, explaining that cutting it down before it goes to seed, is a good start, but that this will not stop the growth, due to the roots already setting in. Ideally, the plant should be dug up and burned, although its is possible to drown the grass, if it is cut below the water line.

He noted that it already exists in Shelburne in several areas, including the ditches in front of KTH and around certain storm water ponds. He proposed that Council adopt an awareness plan, have a disposal and transfer station for residents to use, control or exterminate roadside phragmites and provide staff with awareness training. It was also noted, that many landscapers are using the plant in decorative landscape designs, without realizing that it is an overpowering invasive species. Also, Mr. Lynch notes, homeowners will often do the same, all of which attributes to the spread of the problem.

The problem can easily become ?out of hand?, as seen in two communities on Lake Erie. One, began a plan to deal with the issue as soon as it arose and their cost was about \$3,400. The second community, opted to do nothing for two years, however when they realized the extent of the problem and went to deal with it, the cost for them had risen to around \$85,000.

Phragmites Australis has been shown to reduce property values by between 17 and 25 percent, which amounts to a considerable amount of money on larger properties.

Zoning bylaw

Steve Wever was next on the agenda, to present an application for zoning bylaw on behalf of Fieldgate Homes and the development at Hwy. 89 and County Road 124.

The request was required as part of the draft plan approval process, granted last Council Meeting. The requested zoning changes primarily concentrated on making small adjustments to the various zoning areas in the development, and allowed for things such as reduced front yards and special garage width provisions, increased building heights, model homes and changes to sight triangle on local street intersections.

All of these and others, were to permit the best optimum design features for the permitted 250 single family homes approved in the draft plan.

In other parts of the development, it was requested that the maximum number of attached units, townhomes, be set at 8 rather than 6 and reduced front yards also.

In all, the requested changes were for the facilitation of a better development overall and perhaps a less expensive building experience, without devaluing the homes themselves.

Coun. Walter Benotto asked if the homes included porches and was told yes, but that the builder would like to see them bigger than was currently allowed. When asked if this was feasible, Steve Wever replied it would depend upon the lot size, as zoning requires certain set backs and dimensions.

Coun. Lynda Buffett asked about townhouse bungalows and was told that they were not planned, as the townhouses were not large enough and they were expensive and the demand was not there. It would, however, be an option in the single family dwellings.

Walter Benotto then asked about the height of the stairs going to the porches. The reply was that the design was to build close to the ground, so heights and number of steps would be minimal.

Mayor Wade Mills inquired about the price range and was told that had not been considered yet. However, as these zoning changes included allowing for a sales office, if approved, it would put the sales force into action to set a price range and begin sales. On a side note, it has come to the Town's attention that the Township of Amaranth has an objection to the development, but as of Monday night, nothing formal had been filed and no details of the objection revealed.

Once the appeal has been filed and the grounds for the objection revealed, the Town will be able to deal with this surprise.

The presentation was received and carried, by Council.

Summerhill subdivision

The final bit of business was an application for final acceptance for the Neighbourhoods of Summerhill subdivision, which is now complete.

Although there are one or two housekeeping issues to be dealt with, the developer is willing to pay the Town to handle them. Staff is comfortable with the costs presented for these matters and Steve Wever recommended granting the final acceptance, once the issues are accommodated. Council received his report and the motion to grant approval was carried.