

Local resident requests bylaw exemption for birds of prey

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LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

A Shelburne resident is hoping to keep and train birds of prey after approaching Town Council about implementing an exemption to its exotic pets bylaw.

During their meeting on Monday (Feb. 24), Shelburne Town Council received a delegation from local resident Julien Wong Lun Hing Devonish requesting an exemption from the Animal Care and Control By-law.

The request asked for the exemption for "provincial licensed falconers" to keep and train birds of prey within the community.

"As falconry is provincially regulated, it is entirely possible for the township to make an exemption to the current ban on exotic pets for those who hold a valid provincial license," wrote Wong Lun Hing Devonish, in the delegation letter.

Falconry is a regulated heritage practice of training birds of prey to hunt wild game, including assisting in the conservation of wildlife and pest control. To practice falconry in Ontario, an individual must obtain an Apprentice Falconry Licence, which requires a small game hunting license, an apprenticeship under an experienced falconer, and a completion of the Ontario Hawking Club Apprenticeship Program.

Wong Lun Hing Devonish informed Town Council that he currently owns one raptor and works with two others for animal control. He indicated that while he could potentially have ownership of two birds, he will likely remain with the one as "one is more than enough."

According to the Town of Shelburne, the Animal Care and Control by-law lists eagles, hawks, falcons and owls as prohibited birds to own.

In his delegation to Town Council, Wong Lun Hing Devonish noted that the exemption approach has been adopted in other municipalities, including the Town of Orangeville, City of Waterloo, and Town of Pelham.

Coun. Walter Benotto raised the question of where the bird would stay and where he planned to train with it.

"I have engineered plans to build a modular aviary to fit underneath my deck," explained Wong Lun Hing Devonish. "I have a property that I have permission to use on 2nd Line and I also have one in Melancthon I have access to. If weather does not allow me, we fly them using a long tether with a weight, which allows us to control the bird."

Wong Lun Hing Devonish also noted that the Ministry of Natural Resources has requirements that prey birds be kept in an 8x8 enclosure with one window and double doors. He added that his planned aviary would be "fully enclosed".

Coun. Dan Sample inquired about falconry training within town limits and the liability of injury to the bird due to developments and construction occurring in the area.

"As a licensed falconer we always go and scout the area that we fly," said Wong Lun Hing Devonish.

Coun. Kyle Fegan raised the concern some Town residents might have for the safety of their smaller animals such as dogs and cats.

"There is a one per cent chance. You train your bird to target the prey you go after. A bird may not be the smartest thing in the

world, but as a bird of prey it will look at what it's stooping into; big risk, little reward,? said Wong Lun Hing Devonish.

Shelburne Town Council received the delegation and referred the matter to town staff for a report.

The report is estimated to return to Town Council in April.