



INTERIM TREE BYLAW WORKING GROUP MEETING NOTES

**Tuesday, March 28, 2017, 4 – 6 p.m.
Main Floor Conference Room**

ATTENDEES:

WG Members: Andrew Gitt, Craig Bench, Debbie Parhar Bevan, Don Harrison, Ian Ferguson, Lisa Morris, Mary Gamel, Nic Tsangarakis, William Cafferata

Council Liaison: Councillor Mary-Ann Booth

Staff: Chris Bishop, Manager of Land Development & Erika Syvokas, Planning Research Assistant

Regrets: Ernest Bodie

1. WELCOME

Chris Bishop opened the meeting at 4:02 PM welcoming everyone. Lisa and William introduced themselves to the group.

2. APPROVAL OF MARCH 28, 2017 MEETING AGENDA

The Agenda was approved as circulated.

3. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING NOTES

The notes of March 7, 2017 meeting were approved as circulated.

4. DISCUSSION OF REQUESTED MATERIALS

- Staff circulated support documents as well as posted information on the ITBWG web page.
- Staff reiterated that any documents can be printed by request.

Discussion around documents provided:

- Task force from 1975 – interesting to see ongoing discussion has been taking place over years/decades. The issues are still common today.
- Missing from materials – measurable objectives. I.e. forest coverage. Biodiversity not stressed in any of the materials.
- Carmel, California's bylaw
 - good because it is measurable but permit process seems daunting
- Delta's web page – very appealing to the eye. First statement was around trees. Trees there to protect us. Provided rationale for tree protection.
- Surrey – also good because talked about what you can do not what you can't do.
- Previous DWV survey didn't address the question of should there be a bylaw in the first place. Staff provided rationale for survey structure.

- Chris gave an overview of Official Community Plan review process with respect to trees:
 - The OCP review of policy chapters is in its initial phase (outreach and objectives).
 - Focus on raising awareness-raising about priorities for the future. As the review starts to focus in on the different chapters such as neighbourhood character and environment we can add to those chapters/policy development.
 - The OCP is a high level umbrella for more detailed strategies or regulations. Staff will ensure OCP reflects findings/recommendations from the ITBWG.

5. DISCUSSION RE: HOW TO ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY REGARDING VALUES AROUND TREE MANAGEMENT

This item was deferred until next meeting. Instead, the group had a discussion around determining what the group wants to accomplish.

Discussion:

- What are we trying to achieve? What is the definition of the problem? What is our vision statement? Need a way to make decisions along the road.
- Focus on private lands but the group can provide input to the Parks Department for the public realm.
- Just because other municipalities have a tree bylaw doesn't necessarily mean that we should have a tree bylaw.
- Staff were given clear direction to bring the tree bylaw into effect and staff didn't want to question whether or not a bylaw was wanted in the first place. Therefore it was conscious decision to not ask the question. **ACTION: CB to look into previous tree bylaw circa 1980.**
- Council reasoning/background for tree bylaw: the impetus came from rapid change that was occurring (redevelopment) and clear-cutting. There was a feeling in the community that this rapid change was driven by real estate speculation. Council was getting significant feedback from the community demanding action. The plan was to defer establishment of a bylaw on private land to discuss building bulk and boulevards but the reaction was so strong that the direction changed to focus onto trees immediately.
- 'Noise' - if the level of 'noise' is determinant of action taking place how do we determine if that is representative of the broader community sentiment?
- 54% of survey respondents wanted to reduce the tree protection size. Therefore this is a clear indication that there is a problem. However, this information could be further dissected/reviewed. **ACTION: Request by NT for categorization of the responses.**
- It is often in the interest of developers to completely clear land for development. If we are losing 3 trees on average per building permit we literally are losing hundreds of trees a year with no requirements for replacements. NT did a survey at the WV Farmers Market last summer (2016) which asked the question "would you like to see measures in place to protect private trees?" Received 200 signatures in favour of protecting trees. **ACTION: NT will forward a summary to the group.**
- The challenge changes and evolves over time. In neighbourhoods developed in the 60's the trees are often very large. Therefore, trees have grown very large since the 1975 study.
- Any changes in water flow/run-off i.e. impacts on flow of water? Hard to get a definitive answer on this, but likely.

- There needs to be a fair process so that people don't get cornered by the bylaw. Should use 'tree management' over more punitive restrictions. Need to educate the community about why we are doing this and the benefits to the community.
- Public engagement process – showed two camps – full redevelopment vs. tree management on sites that are not redeveloping.
- Common theme from the survey - people don't want to be limited on what they can do on their private properties.
- Value should be placed on the ecosystem/protection of the environment.
- Maybe we should be asking: what do we believe the outcome should look like? Common interest in the benefits of trees. Differences are over how to manage them on private property. This might look really different than a bylaw. Incentives, tree replacement, education etc. A more holistic approach.
- Problem we are trying to solve or vision that we are trying to create?
 - Positive like Surrey or Delta. What you can do rather than can't. Common goal with the community and municipality.
- Limitations on tree protection in terms of safety. However you can try to achieve a certain tree canopy to maintain biodiversity.
- Density and changing character plays a huge role. Important to understand that density is an economic driver. Density has to increase to allow the tax base to increase. So need to allow some leeway to allow developers to make the best use of the land. I.e. subdivision of 1 lot into 2 lots.
- Cost benefit analysis – need data and facts to help inform the group's work. Could source studies i.e. one from university of Chicago (from NT) that the benefits from urban forest far out way negatives.
- Would be helpful to have feedback from the DWV District arborist on what is and what isn't working (position is currently vacant) but perhaps hearing from other municipal arborists would help. **ACTION: CB to provide contact information for the CoNV and DNV arborists/teams.**
- Fines should be higher.
- Look at additional survey with a good picture of what people are thinking. Need to come up with right questions. Could do an online poll. Get a firm to do.

What does the group want to accomplish?

Rationale for managing the urban forest.

Develop a process to allow residents to understand how to manage trees on their private property.

Consensus on outcomes we want to achieve:

- What "can" we do process that is flexible
- Maintaining forest cover
- Education and awareness

Deliverable:

Concrete recommendation

Having a vision is important for the community to embrace change. Identify the problem, formulate the vision, and make recommendations.

Visioning exercise

The group completed a visioning exercise that aimed to create some output related to a common vision for how trees might be managed in the District in a time frame of 5 to 10 years. The group was asked to populate post it notes, suggested categories included:

diverse communities, incentives, bylaws, replacement of trees, education, tree canopy, safety, light and views, privacy, process, and environment.

The group then sorted the sticky notes (verbatim comments shown below) by category:

Diverse communities

- Neighbour consultation for large tree removal
- Balanced approach
- Thoughtful approach
- Diversity of opinions are considered
- People talking to people
- Good neighbour guidelines for tree management
- Community based, value based conflict resolution process

Incentives

- We win an award in the way we manage trees
- Municipal tax reduction to maintain trees on private property

Replacement of trees

- Replacement: recommendations vs. enforcement
- Every tree cut down is replaced by another tree and maintained
- DWV tree planting program
- Ok to cut down a tree (certain parameters) and needs to be replaced
- Incentives to encourage tree planting by residents
- Minimum tree replacement requirements tied to building permits
- New/replacement smaller trees planted in urban areas

Education

- School syllabus value of trees
- Education for tree and vegetation planting
- Community forum of trees (1 yearly)
- Not uninformed (no planned communities)
- Change is not feared
- Awareness of tree value
- Urban forest stewardship
- Residents understand why trees are important
- District arborist providing consultation to home owners
- New construction conforming to existing neighbourhoods with better landscape plans
- Neighbourhoods maintained to past standards (current)

Green spaces and Tree Maintenance

- More green spaces interspersed with houses
- Commercial area green spaces
- Overgrowth is maintained
- A balance of green space
- Groomed trees
- Proper pruning feature trees
- No large fast growing trees planted i.e. Western Red Cedar

Light and views

- Sunlight shines on a clean, vibrant community
- Sunlight and view considerations
- Views maintained

- Sunlight maintained
 - o Contributes to using less energy during day time
 - o Allows flowers, vegetable gardens and all gardens to flourish.
- Designed tree/growth areas
- Sunlight flows on a clear, vibrant community
- Views maintained
- Maintain views through educated planting

Privacy

- Privacy – trees on perimeter of lots, neighbourhood consulted

Tree canopy

- Suitable tree canopy % across DWV
- Tree canopy not diminished from 2017
- Maintained canopy
- More trees planted on boulevards
- Scale of trees to neighbourhood matches
- District sponsored ornamental tree program
- Traffic is calmed by median cherry blossoms

Process/Bylaw

- Mindful building practices rather than clear-cutting
- Flexible permit process
- Best practices resource for tree management (DWV specific)
- Efficient process for cutting permits
- Property owner determines how to meet objectives
- Ideally each lot given “individualized” assessment
- Fair tree cutting regulation
- Bylaw that meets standard of best practice
- Simple procedure for permits

Environment

- Habitat for animals is preserved/recognized
- Trees recognized for water retention and shade
- Biological value resource for the community
- Municipal lands serve as bio-diversity reserves
- Emphasis on native tree species
- More community gardens
- Green roof tops – gardens and trees
- Trees suitable for climate change
- Native vs. non-native species
- Ivy is eradicated
- Birds are chirping in the trees
- Ivy no longer exists
- Tree study on health of community forest
- Wildlife consideration
- Less cedar hedges and laurel hedges
- More birds, less racoons
- Value placed the benefits that significant trees and the overall tree canopy have to a neighbourhood (consideration of the bigger picture i.e. neighbourhood vs. individual lots)
- Multiple species – more deciduous and less coniferous

Safety

- If home owner feels unsafe because of tree can apply to remove it without question
- Safety panel (community based) for lot to moderate risk situations
- Power line safety
- Root growth control
- Overgrown trees impacting sidewalks roads are maintained
- Wind prone tree hazards removed
- Trees and shrubs not overhanging roadways

6. ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

Chair: Debbie

Vice Chair: Nic

7. NEXT STEPS

- Will pick up today's discussion at next meeting as well as discuss how to engage the community regarding values around tree management.
- Set out workplan and timelines.
- **ACTION: ES to send out projected calendar – meeting bookings in Outlook. Showing 2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month.**
- **ACTION: ES to send out revised contact list so all members can freely contact one another. Note: Please do not share contacts outside the group.**

8. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting was adjourned at 6:10 p.m.