

Ashton, Fran

From: Alex. Bovey [Alex@Boveys.info]
Sent: Sunday, 2 April 2006 10:39 PM
To: MayorandCouncillors
Subject: Tree Protection Bylaw

Reference:
http://www.richmond.ca/_shared/assets/040306_item713297.pdf

After listening to the comments of the Mayor and Councillors at the March 20th General Purposes Committee meeting, I realized you appear to have only 3 main concerns.

You want to somehow protect "significant" trees.
You have to let go the fact that ALL trees are important.
You might consider that a 75 cm tree MAY be significant.

Secondly, you want to prevent clear cutting for development.
You need to require trees in developments, and then there will be no need to get rid of them. You already require so many other things from developers, so why not trees too? That's where you can get into landscaping and follow up, if need be! Perhaps you can give credits of some sort for the maintenance of mature trees.

Thirdly, you don't want to inconvenience the homeowner.

May I respectfully suggest you scrap the bylaw as it is being proposed and address the problems directly without using a blanket solution?

We all have concerns about the preservation of trees in our city but surely this should not require you to assault the privacy of our property as is proposed. In developing a strategy it seems you need the answers to a few questions, which do not yet appear to have been adequately addressed.

How many trees are we losing?
How many trees are being planted?
How many trees of various sizes are there in Richmond?
Why do people cut down trees that may seem important to others?
Why is it so many homes do not have or want trees?
Why do homes with trees need to be controlled?
What will be the out of pocket costs to the homeowner?
Can we reward stewardship rather than tax and penalize it?

We live in a wet temperate climate where trees grow like weeds. Trees, cedars in particular, are subject to root rot with our high water table and therefore can have a limited life span. Our many flowering trees approach 20-25 cm DBH at the end of their short lives. More reasons to accept that this is the way things are in Richmond without creating more administration.

There are more trees in Richmond now than at any time in its history despite your concerns. This is partly thanks to the city's own efforts as well as that of developers and numerous homeowners but also because it is not all farmland or flooding delta any more. One need only notice this while flying in or out of YVR or look at the aerial photographs - past vs. present.

A concern I have is that if the bylaw is adopted as presently proposed, those of us who like to plant and have trees

will have to consider their removal as they approach permit size in order to maintain control of our landscaping. This in time could defeat a purpose of the bylaw.

Another concern is that the statistics re permits are only for the winter months and do not yet reflect the normal outdoor season.

What statistics you do have would indicate that the vast majority of permits were for large trees even though the DBH threshold was set very low.

The planting of replacement trees is punitive especially if they are to be planted on public property. The city already has a significant planting policy and a nursery to support it for which we are paying taxes.

I realize you said you didn't mean to include hedges, but some may not consider a line of trees to be a hedge. As I pointed out, I have 32 trees along the edge of my property that are greater than 20 cm in diameter at breast height and they are 7-10 meters high. They grow up about 50-70 cm a year. My small lot is only about 470 square meters (about 5,000 sq.ft.) excluding the house but including the driveway. At least 2 of 4 adjacent property owners would have me remove my trees. Despite your concern, the proposed bylaw does not exempt my hedge. My neighbours want more sunlight.

I want more sunlight. One year my neighbours paid to have my trees lowered by almost 3 meters. I want to keep my trees and trim them and yes, from time to time change the canopy effect, remove or replace them. Because my trees are so high I only do major topping every few years.

With this proposed bylaw, I and other working families like mine will be inconvenienced by bureaucracy, subjective interpretation and penalized with permits and professional fees or fines not to mention the increased cost (taxes) of administration.

While we know that Richmond may be considered an affluent community, your actions, contrary to your responsibility to serve us all, are aiding and abetting this at the expense of many Richmond homeowners who may now be property rich but are not so well off cash wise, let alone able to afford to buy their property today.

If after due consideration, you still feel that we must have a Tree Protection bylaw with all the costs that the homeowner must endure, at least set the DBH threshold higher so that it protects larger more significant trees such as 50 cm or more, preferably 75 cm.

Respectfully submitted,

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