

Council Meeting Presentation, April 10, 2006.

My Name is Joe Oeser and I live at 12004 No. 2 Road.

On November 14th. Council asked staff to produce something that would protect significant trees.

Instead of thinking about the goal staff immediately went out under Council's number 3 option choice, hired a bunch of consultants who in turn sold them a faulty bylaw. And staff bought it without reading it or thinking about any of the implications that came with it.

That is why I am here today. What you are voting on today is a tree replacement policy not a tree protection bylaw. Unfortunately this policy is in the form of a bylaw resulting in a type of "expropriation without compensation" at least from the homeowner's point of view. It is purely a make work project and does nothing to protect trees. Some salaries will probably go up as a result of managers having more employees to supervise, bureaucracy will grow bigger but old trees won't and young trees are being given a death sentence at a 19.5 cm. dbh.

As I have already pointed out at the committee stage over and over again; the bureaucracy is already totally out of control. Processes are done half baked. Privacy policies are being ignored. Misleading information is being delivered to the public as well as to you the Council and you are either too ignorant or too myopic to see the facts laid out plainly in front of you.

As for cost, if this bylaw goes ahead; by the end of 2006 it will have cost the taxpayers of Richmond \$386,000.00 if all amounts budgeted and allocated are spent. And for what? The net result is fewer trees being planted by the public because they don't want to be dictated to by big brother. Many trees under 20 cm being cut down for the same reason. No significant trees are being protected because permits are issued to virtually every individual who applies for a permit to cut them down. Less than 3% of permit applications are being turned down. 3 applications rejected versus 104 permits issued.

I would like to quote Wayne Craig, the City's Program Coordinator - Development from his report to committee dated August 24th. 2005. In his conclusion he states: Implementing a tree management bylaw will not guarantee significant trees are retained through the redevelopment process as tree retention may not be possible... Other than the 3 options given in his report nothing else was even considered. I would suggest there are fairer alternatives such as a tree tax / credit system.

And here we have Mayor Brodie assuring us that due diligence and best practices are being followed in regards to the Richmond Oval. My experiences with this small piece of tree legislation definitely makes me uneasy about the oval.

Councilor Steves, the most seasoned politician on Council, brought up the most disconcerting and also revealing point at the meeting on April 3rd. How has the City of Richmond slipped from being one of the best places to work to what now appears to be the bottom of the bucket. Many of the employees are still the same so it must be that something has happened within the leadership or better stated lack of leadership. This is reflected in the quality of work produced.

Leadership starts with the Mayor and Council; for once do the right thing, throw out this flawed piece of tree legislation, lets cut our losses now. I'm reasonably certain we will need the money by 2010 if not earlier.

Taxpayers and homeowners are not a bottomless money pit.

Questions Apr. 10

Through the Mayor if I may, I would like to ask a simple question about the application of the bylaw to which I cannot find the answer in the bylaw.

If under a permit I, as a homeowner, am required to plant a replacement tree, how long do I need to maintain it?

The way I read the bylaw, as soon as I plant the replacement tree, it becomes an unregulated tree because even the largest required replacement tree under Schedule A is less than 20 cm dbh and therefore can be cut down without a permit.

I suppose Mr. Massot, who has been opposing this bylaw all along, will be selling a lot of replacement trees which will be cut down shortly after they are planted. I am sure his hope and mine would be that they are at least moved and given to someone who wants them.

If I sell my house is the new purchaser bound by the Manager's satisfaction requirement (section 4.3.2) regarding the replacement tree?

How?

I guess this really is just a make work project.

On a procedural note I would like to mention one thing. The minutes for the General Purposes Committee meeting according to the city's stated practice are to be available online by the Thursday morning following the meeting. I realize that the meeting of April 3rd was somewhat extraordinary in nature but as of 2:06 pm. today no minutes were posted. When I next checked at 3:06 pm. they were finally available. When these minutes are not posted it makes it difficult for those of us who are not accustomed to dealing in these situations to ensure the accuracy of our facts and our understanding of the situation.