



Community Meeting #1
Town of Cobourg Urban Forest Management Plan
Cameco Room, Cobourg Community Centre,
750 D'Arcy Street, Cobourg

2017 May 23

Our File: CBRG 590

**Community Public Meeting #1 – Meeting Notes
Cobourg Urban Forest Management Plan
April 26, 2017; 4:00 to 7:00 p.m.**

Attendees

Names	
Bruce Bellaire	Mary Lou Secord
Klaus Schroeder	Lynn Johnston
Wendy Dannon	Councillor Suzanne Sequin
Lynn & Mary-Lou	Beth Bellaire
David McTavish	Jane Lawson
Sharon Keogh	Brenda Farwell
Miriam Mutton	Councillor Debra McCarthy
Rae & Ella MacCulloch	Philip Calnan
Councillor Aaron Burchat	Astrid Hudsn
Councillor BrianDarling	
Town of Cobourg, Parks	Rory Quigley, Arborist Teresa Behan, Manager
Kilgour & Associates Ltd. (KAL)	Cynthia Levesque, Project Manager
KAL/Madawaska Forestry	Larry Powell, Project Forester

Meeting Notes

1. Welcome and Introductions

Councillor Brian Darling, Chair of the Town Parks Committee, welcomed everyone to this first public discussion for the Town's proposed urban forest management plan. Councillor Darling introduced the project team members – Rory, Cynthia and Larry.

2. Overview of Project Planning Process and Background on Cobourg's Current Urban Forest

Through use of a Powerpoint presentation, Cynthia provided an overview of the plan development process and a summary of the research findings to date that are relevant to Cobourg's proposed urban forest management plan. Presentation topics included: plan purpose, project approach and timeline; a description of Cobourg's current urban forest; Town's planning context and current urban forest management program; community benefits of a healthy urban forest; approach of other municipalities; and Town opportunities and challenges.

3. Discussion of Urban Forest Management Areas that are Working Well, Areas to Improve

- a) Representatives of the **Friends of Victoria Park** expressed **concerns with impacts from the presence of large crowds** in the park. Concerns include heavy traffic impacts on large and small trees, on soil structure and potential to cause soil erosion. It is recommended that more trees be established in Victoria Park to provide needed shade for park users as well as a review of all the activities that occur in Victoria Park, the size of allowed events. The group requested Town consideration of allowing fewer and smaller events and the establishment of more quiet space. The community would like to see large events moved away from Victoria Park. It was recommended that the Town protect what it has in this resource.

The project team confirmed that trees and activities within Victoria Park are being reviewed as part of the planning process. The expressed concerns will be considered by the project team when recommending future directions for urban forest management within Victoria Park.

- b) An example was described of a **neighbourhood** near Valentine, west of Division Street, which has **lost many trees** in recent years. Most recently, a beaver removed 4 trees from this area. The negative change in the neighbourhood aesthetics is significant. Assistance from the Town is requested to restore this area. Trees here are also exposed to strong winds and there is an infestation of dog-strangling vine along the creek.

Residents who are interested in helping the Town care for natural areas (like removing the dog-strangling vine from along the creek, a creek observed to support wildlife and fish) and for trees often are not clear on what they can and cannot do. Clear direction from the Town on how residents can help with trees and specification of what activities are allowable in different areas would be appreciated.

- c) A resident asked if the Town supported **Norway maples**. Rory responded that the Town no longer plants Norway maples. There was discussion that this species is hardy and does fit in some locations. The Town would like to see a reduction in the numbers of Norway maples over time. The resident observed that these trees can require a lot of maintenance and that it is difficult to grown other plants beneath them.
- d) It was recommended that the Town pursue **Heritage designation** for some of its trees so that they will be protected. The Heritage Master Plan was noted to include tools for heritage designation. Rory explained that the **Town has recently nominated a beech tree in Donegan Park for Heritage status with Trees Ontario**. This tree, near the batting cage, is approximately 260 years old. This last old tree in the Town's first park was once part of an area that was full of beech trees. The information on the heritage designation will soon be on the Town website, as part of Canada's 150th celebration. Seeds have been collected from this beech tree and will be propagated in a nursery for planting throughout the Town.

The Town will be looking at other trees for designation of heritage status. Rory explained that some trees, such as the cucumber and butternut trees within the Town, are protected as endangered species.

- e) It was recommended that consideration be given to the potential for the tree canopy to help reduce Town noise. Also, in newer areas where the businesses are very close to the road, there is not any space left to place trees to screen the buildings, shade parking lots and add to the street aesthetics. Consider requiring the provision of adequate space and **placement of trees around commercial buildings**. The Town should also **promote tree oases or islands in parking lots**. Larger trees would be best to establish, if possible.

It was confirmed that the reason that the Hospital does not have large trees in close proximity is to ensure safe use of the helicopter pad. It was suggested that more shrubs could be planted around the hospital.

- f) An **Education Program** is needed for private land owners. Some important information on tree care could be passed on easily with a resulting improvement in the health of Town trees. Some topics suggested for public education include:
 - o **Damage from weed trimmers** have been observed to be a major cause of affected tree health;
 - o The importance and value of **tree pruning**, when and under what conditions, how to conduct and/or arrange, the resulting benefits (such as no loss of limbs from a pruned tree during recent ice storm);
 - o The importance of **watering trees** and suggestions for how to do so, such as redirecting storm water runoff from paved areas to trees;
 - o Suggestions for improving tree health and the ability of trees to better adapt to effects of climate change.
- g) Consider a **carbon offset program** available to businesses and residents whereby donations could be made to the Town in lieu of carbon emissions from home use, car and air travel, recreation. The Town could use the collected funds for tree planting and management.
- h) A resident asked if there are any successful Canadian examples of **naturalized school yards**. The project team noted that a non-governmental organization called Evergreen has been naturalizing school yards in Toronto and Ottawa for many years. It was suggested that a pilot school naturalization project be initiated in Cobourg.
- i) Consider a Town **incentive program for use of rainwater** for plant and tree watering. A Town Councillor is currently working on incentives to encourage establishment of water retention gardens (rain gardens).
- j) An **urban forest stewardship program “staffed” by volunteers** could be a good way for the Town to obtain help in tree growing, planting and care. An education component would be necessary to train volunteers on what needs to be done and to understand the importance of the work to trees, the Town and community.
- k) Consider an urban forest initiative that is a “**Celebration of Trees!**” The initiative could gather residents’ stories about trees, such as “we were married under this large maple in west Cobourg”. Such stories would raise people’s awareness of trees and their connection to our lives. Perhaps as part of Canada’s 150th celebration, trees could be identified that are 150 years old, trees that were in place at the time the Town of Cobourg was formed. Individual stories relating to these identified trees could be shared to provide people with a tangible connection to Town history.
- l) The urban forest management plan could be celebrated as part of the 150 year celebration.

4. Vision for the Future Town Forest and How to Achieve the Vision

Attendees offered the following desired perspectives on the view and experience of the Town’s future urban forest:

- a) Councillor Darling recommended that the Town determine its current tree canopy cover and consider setting a **goal for forest cover** of 30-35 %. He recommended that Cobourg should set

a goal that is among the furthest reaching by municipalities, not a target that is in the middle of Ontario/Canadian communities. The canopy cover goal should include an appropriate timeframe for its achievement, such as 2037-2047, or other date that balances being far-reaching with what can be reasonably achieved within the time period.

- b) Another Councillor recommended that the Town should have a **welcoming natural environment**. It should be a place where people want to live, and a place where they have the opportunity to experience nature. The entrance / gateways to the Town should be enhanced by placement of trees. **Cobourg should be a “Go To” destination**. The events at the waterfront were noted as attracting a lot of people to Cobourg; they are much enjoyed, but maybe they do not all have to be on the waterfront.
- c) In the future, I will be able to walk downtown along **streets shaded by trees** for the entire distance. The walk will be peaceful, not hectic.
- d) **Victoria Park will be a passive use park with lots of grass and trees**. It will be home to smaller but not large events. The resources here should be protected and preserved for future generations.
- e) Councillor Seguin noted that she has directly experienced the **value of trees to a community**. She was Mayor in Prescott-Russell County during the eastern Ontario and Québec ice storm of 1998 and her municipality lost a large number of trees. Cobourg donated to the community in 1998, a gesture that was much appreciated.
- f) It was suggested that attendees think back to when they were children, and to what the Town is believed to have been like 150 years ago, when Canada formed. From this perspective, where should the Town be in 150 years?
 - **Families will be able to cycle along pathways with lots of trees** to reach the downtown. There will be lots of good events for families to enjoy. Families need to be part of the Town – that means events and the facilities to support events and activities. **Trees and trails will connect people to destinations all across Town**.
 - **More trees by the Boardwalk**.
 - **Nickerson’s Woods is thriving and healthy**.
 - The major arterial of Kerr Street will have a **naturalized streetscape**.
 - **Natural landscapes and streams will be enhanced and healthy**.
 - **A Town full of large, healthy trees** that are climbed by children with a book for reading. Trees will be a place to escape technology.
 - Educate children on the qualities and importance of our natural environment. Now **build the desired natural environment within this generation** so that it can be enjoyed by many future generations.
 - For my grandchildren, they should be able to **experience nature**. Have children plant a tree every year, a tree for which they are then responsible for its care. Fostering of such a **tree ethic** will then be **passed on to future generations**.
 - **Plan for trees in the development that will occur over the next 150 years**. With much more development to occur over the next 150 years, we should ask a lot more of developers, including the allocation of much more land area as greenspace. Residents

could be asked to provide/plant X number of trees per household and more trees and space could be asked of developers to help reach tree cover goals faster.

- A summary was offered that all attendees **want more trees**. The **infrastructure to support those trees must be in place**. We need to ensure now that there will be a place for that tree in 150 years.
- g) An experience was described of the treed boulevards that led to the location of the G8 conference (in Toronto, Washington?) which was fantastic. A lot of funds had been allocated to the area. Cobourg could consider allocating **adequate funds now to achieve the type of tree cover desired for the future**. Note also that trees provide the benefit of slowing traffic, without addition of formal traffic calming measures.
- h) I will be able to take my **self-driving car down streets with lots of trees** in the middle of the road.
- i) **Corridors should also be established for wildlife**, as are now planned for cars. There should be **ecological linkages across the Town**, east-west and north-south.
- j) In answer to the question of how the above vision descriptions can be achieved, the group offered:
 - Rory *plus* additional **staff** is key;
 - **Adequate funding** for tree management is key; perhaps businesses can assist with the funding. Organization of the needed funding must be allocated to someone other than Rory (he does not have the time);
 - Establish a **committee to look for urban forest management funding**;
 - Provide **incentives for businesses to place more trees on their properties**;
 - Find a way to **address the lack of space for trees** that has resulted from directions of *Places to Grow Act* (building close to the street, parking is behind the building);
 - **Consider establishment of easements for trees in people's front yards**, on private property. Town could care for the tree planted there, provided that adequate resources are allocated within the budget to do so.
 - **Encourage people to care for trees on Town land** in front of their houses.
 - Establish a '**green funerals' program**, whereby people are encouraged to **bequest money to the Town in their wills**, or before, in exchange for a Town commitment that the money will be **used to plant and care for a specified number of trees**.
 - A discussion on **cost-effective trees** for planting included an explanation that bare – root whips cost \$40-50 (residents are charged \$20-25). These whips establish very well, almost as well as trees with a root ball wrapped in burlap. The Town only buys larger trees when reasonably priced.

5. Meeting Closure and Project Next Steps

Rory and Cynthia thanked everyone for their time and thoughtful contributions. This meeting is the beginning of the plan building process. The project team will compile all the input received from stakeholders and the community today and tomorrow, along with the background research findings to prepare a draft urban forest management plan document for the Town.

Meeting notes to summarize today's discussion will be prepared and shared with all participants. Forest stakeholders and the community will be invited to meet with the project team again in June to

review and comment upon the draft Plan document. The final plan, for senior management and Council approval is to be completed in September 2017.

Action Items:

1. *Integrate plan direction and vision ideas, as described above, into the draft urban forest management plan for the Town.*