

Neighbours make pitch to protect nearby trees

By Brock Weir

Residents of Longthorpe Court and the surrounding neighbourhood don't take their trees lightly.

A large contingent of neighbours came out to last Tuesday's Council meeting to show their support of retaining the three mature trees on their neighbour's property. For some of them, having a view of the 'majestic' trees sealed the deal on their properties,' they said.

'We relied on the [builder's representation],' said resident Tanya Cooper of word she received from the builder that the trees were protected, a view which was bolstered, she said, by a call to Town Hall. When the subdivision agreement was entered into, it reflects the Town of Aurora's policy'and I don't understand what has changed with that subdivision'other than the purchaser of the lot has a different view.

'You need to weigh and balance competing interests and it can be difficult at times, but in this situation, I don't see how the interests of the proposed purchaser outweigh all of our various interests in the public policy of Aurora.'

Neighbour Anthony Cho argued that if the property owner's objective is to remove any potential flooding on his property, there are viable alternatives out there that could do the jobs and keep the trees.

'I ask Council to ask themselves this question: We recently had four acres of clear cutting in Aurora and another 1.5 hectares of clear cutting by parties that do not respect our town or our laws,' he said. 'I understand this is not another clear cutting, but certainly another example of a party with total disregard for our community.

'I do see these trees as a symbol of what this town represents. It represents our community, it represents our heritage and respecting nature. Consider the message this sends to builders if you decide to remove the trees. Consider the message if the trees are preserved and the builders are forced to provide a viable solution. I think this sends the right message to anyone who wishes to operate in our town.'

On the opposite side of the fence was Jeffrey Streisfield, a lawyer appearing on behalf of homeowner Chris Katsopolous. He said it should be clear to all concerned that a grading issue has been 'confirmed'. The drainage problems, he said, have been underscored in the new report and he emphasized the problems this situation was creating for his client.

'There is indeed a purchaser sitting out there waiting to get into this home,' said Mr. Streisfield. 'It is referred to in the report that he had a closing date of November 2013. The fact of the matter is I think this is the second or third closing date and that date needs to be met for all concerned.

'The fact of the matter is all purchasers here relied on proper drainage being made available to their lots. With the greatest of respects, in order to avoid this issue, staff have recognized that that drainage issue can only be resolved through the tree removal and it is in the interest of the municipality to allow it to occur despite the fact trees would be removed. They will be replaced with securities being provided by the builder.

'Staff have given you a solution to this problem. I urge you to accept it as reflected in the recommendations.'