

Residents demand action to curb speeders on Kennedy and Mavrinac

By Brock Weir

Dismal feedback from surveys conducted by the Town almost led to a pilot project to install speed cushions on five traffic problem areas being kicked to the curb, but residents turned out in droves calling for action.

‘This is democracy in action,’ said Councillor Wendy Gaertner at last week’s General Committee meeting, responding to several residents who came forward demanding the pilot project go ahead.

In the end, Council ‘ in a decision that is set to be ratified this week ‘ rejected staff recommendations to bin the pilot project in favour of going ahead with the project on Kennedy Street West and leaving the door open to more streets in the near future, including Mavrinac Boulevard.

‘It is basically a runway from Bathurst to Yonge Street,’ said Gilberto Pesegi, a resident of Kennedy Street West, who delegated to Council with an extensive list of signatures from his Kennedy Street neighbours in favour of speed cushions. ‘According to my neighbours, they have tried numerous times to have speed bumps installed and that has been turned down by the Town. For what reason, I have no idea.’

After speaking with many Councillors, Mr. Pesegi said he went door to door, contacting every resident of Kennedy Street with his petition reaching what he estimated was 98 per cent of the community.

‘Everyone I spoke to was in complete agreement that speeding was a problem on our street and something had to be done,’ he said, addressing why there might have been a poor response to the Town’s survey as well as to a public open house which staff noted brought out just two Aurorans. ‘They said it was a lost cause for them, like it as a waste of their time. Some of them have been there for 30 or 40 years and nothing has been done. A lot of the people are seniors, people who can’t get out of their house very easily and can’t attend those meetings.

‘We moved onto Kennedy Street for one reason and one reason only: we love the beautiful nostalgia of it. It had so much history and so much prestige. I was fully aware of the traffic on the street. What I can’t handle is the speed in which these vehicles are travelling. It is not fair for myself. It is not fair for my wife who has to pull out of her driveway every morning to take my kid to his functions, and it is not fair for my child who is eventually going to be playing on these streets.’

This was a point driven home by young Jean-Luc Bouffard who came to the podium joined by his mother.

‘I don’t want to lose any of my friends being hit by a car,’ he said. ‘Imagine losing one of your best friends being hit by a car. That is really sad.’

According to Dr. Beverley Bouffard, the safety of children in the area should be a paramount concern.

‘My son’s friend was hit at the intersection,’ she said of Kennedy Street and Corner Ridge Road. ‘However, the car sped by. He didn’t have any injury and he didn’t know what to do. In 2011, we were here and a Council member told us, ‘why don’t you just try to park your cars on the road to divert traffic? Well, a resident on Kennedy Street actually did and guess what? Her car got damaged. None of these ideas are very smart or safe.’

Complaints, she added, have been launched with the York Regional Police, resulting in some monitoring on the part of the police force, but, she said, it is not their job to be ‘sitting permanently’ at the intersection. It is the ‘Town’s burden’ to fix.

‘Placing the burden on the residents to repeatedly road watch is both impractical, unethical and inefficient,’ she said.

While the Kennedy Street contingent was strong, newer sections of Aurora were also well represented at the meeting, particularly

Mavrinac Boulevard. Delegating to Council, resident Brian Wilson said in the four years he has lived on Mavrinac, speeding has gotten progressively worse.

Pretty much every single day I am on the road I have someone come right up behind me and ride my bumper the entire way either from St. John's or from Wellington right to my house, he said. I have lost count of the amount of times on Mavrinac where people have gone around me and passed me. I even had one incident where I thought I would be a little courageous and try to prevent the person from passing. I wouldn't do it again because it infuriated them to the point where they actually got out of the car and started threatening me.

Staff recommended the speed cushion pilot not go ahead because many of the streets surveyed failed to reach a 70 per cent response rate. Mr. Wilson said this was a lofty goal as municipal elections don't even crack a 40 per cent voter turnout.

Part of your mandate is to protect the citizens and help them and keep them safe, he concluded. I am hoping you will look to do what's right and do something in the area to protect the citizen. At some point in time, something will happen. Someone will get hurt, I can guarantee it.