

Controversial trees need to come down despite opposition, says Town

By Brock Weir

Despite the efforts of Councillors to preserve three mature trees on a private property on Longthorpe Court, the trees have got to go.

This is the word of Town Staff that will be considered at Council this week, following a report there is no chance of properly grading a property with the trees standing in the way.

The three trees on the property of Chris Katsopoulos, near Bayview Avenue and Vandorf Sideroad, have dominated hours of Council debate over recent months. The issue stems from a grading plan approved by the Town on the property which did not take into account the mature trees in question.

In order for the plan to be carried out, the trees will have to be removed. The plan, however, brought the surrounding community en masse to Council to protest the tree cutting, stating they bought their homes specifically because they were close to the tree grove.

Hundreds of trees were felled in the creation of this community and the three in question are the last ones standing.

Councillors will be asked once again to approve a tree replacement plan for the property after rejecting it out of hand earlier this fall in favour of saving the trees and coming up with a new grading plan.

?The builder has attempted to grade the lot to both achieve the requirements of the approved master grading and drainage plan and the lot grading plan while preserving the trees,? said Ilmar Simanovskis, Director of Infrastructure, for the Town of Aurora, in a memo to Council. ?The grading that has been completed on the site is that the side slopes on the south side of the lot are too steep and do not meet the requirements of a three to one slope. The proper slope cannot be achieved due to the location of the southernmost tree, which interferes with the required swale.

?A second swale was created between the two clusters of trees to facilitate drainage away from the building, which may provide some drainage westward, but only to a limited area of the rear yard. The location and elevation of the existing trees makes it impossible to provide adequate and proper grading and drainage that conforms to the approved master grading and drainage plan due to the location and elevation of trees.

?The builder has made best efforts to facilitate adequate drainage while preserving the existing trees; however, the final result could not be approved by the Town as the revised drainage patterns do not create a usable and well-drained rear yard.?

So, after over seven hours of Council debate over the last two months, numerous delegations, and Councillors coming down on various and sometimes changing sides on whether or not to ?save? the trees, or let the grading go ahead as planned, Councillors, the homeowner and the neighbours are back at square one.

The last time the matter was discussed was the October 29 meeting of Council when Councillors pressed for a resolution on the matter.

?I think every member of Council should consider this an urgent item, considering how many weeks we have prevaricated over making a decision and how few weeks are left for the closing date of this house,? said Councillor Evelyn Buck, questioning why the issue wasn't on that evening's agenda so it could be dealt with right then and there.

When Mayor Dawe suggested there had been no word back because the builder hadn't come back to the Town with anything, Councillor Buck countered that he hadn't ?come back with a new plan because he can't think of a new plan? that could conform to Council's direction.