

Fleury Park tree was structurally unsafe, say staff

The removal of a centuries-old willow tree at Fleury Park raised residential concerns and a wave of nostalgia last week, but municipal staff say the tree in question was unsafe for the public.

At issue is a landmark tree which was removed as part of ongoing renovations and facility updates at Fleury Park, just south of the Aurora Community Centre.

Its removal sparked a flurry of discussion on social media, ranging from concerns that the tree was removed without public notice, to nostalgic memories of the tree which had become nothing short of a landmark for them.

‘It had significant damage in a storm a number of years ago,’ said Sara Tienkamp, Aurora’s Director of Operations, when asked about the tree by Ward 2 Councillor Rachel Gilliland at last week’s Committee of the Whole meeting. ‘Some of the main structural limbs had been removed and, as a result, there was a large cavity.’

‘When we were doing the design for the retrofit at Fleury Park, we had it assessed for structural integrity and to see whether it could be retained. It was found that it was beyond, and due to the species of tree, willows are very weak-wooded, so it was determined that it could potentially be a public safety hazard in the future. We decided to remove it proactively, and there’s a very robust replanting plan within the park as part of the reconstruction.’

Responding to the analysis, Ward 3 Councillor Wendy Gaertner suggested communication with nearby residents could have been more robust.

‘I’m not in favour of putting any pins, or nails, or thumbtacks into tree trunks,’ she said. ‘But, in the case like that, could we have put up a sign? The residents could have just read what was happening to the tree and why, because there was quite a bit of uproar.’

By Brock Weir
Editor
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter