

New committee set to be struck to look at traffic safety issues

Council has received two draft Terms of References for the formation of a new committee—the Active Transportation and Traffic Safety Advisory Committee—and for the renaming of the Community Advisory Committee to be the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee, on February 7 at the General Committee meeting.

The draft Terms of Reference for the Active Transportation and Traffic Safety Advisory Committee were developed through consultation with Planning and Development staff to ensure that the purpose, duties and functions aligned with the subject matter that the committee would be advising upon, and compared to other Ontario municipalities for best practices.

If approved at Council on February 28, the Active Transportation and Traffic Safety Advisory Committee will support and advise in all aspects of traffic safety issues that affect the Town of Aurora as a whole. Town Clerk Mike de Rond said Council will receive recommendations through reports from the advisory committee review.

“The way that advisory committees have evolved with the Town is that staff will bring traffic safety issues, as well as active transportation issues, and get the committee's thoughts on it, and then Council will know the committee's thoughts in the advisory committee review section of reports,” he said.

Ward 3 Councillor Wendy Gaertner said that the point of the committee should be to hear the traffic safety concerns of residents and that she couldn't support the current draft of Terms of Reference unless it was amended. Gaertner suggested that the current committee would be contrary to former Traffic Safety Advisory Committee descriptions formed in 2007.

“I think it needs to be in the purpose that the committee will also hear residents' traffic safety concerns. I mean, that was the whole point of the committee, that they wouldn't come to Council, they would come to the committee,” she said.

“I certainly couldn't support it in this form. It's completely contrary to the past purpose of the Traffic Safety Advisory Committee.”

Ward 5 Councillor John Gallo, who had served on the committee in the past and who said he thought the current wording was acceptable, said that the proper way to handle issues would be for the residents to speak with staff, the staff to bring forward the issue to the committee, and then the committee discuss the issue with Council along with their advice and recommendations.

“I don't think it's a good idea for [residents] coming straight to the podium and asking the committee,” he said. “It's not the proper way to handle it. It has to go to staff first, they analyze it, it comes to the committee, they discuss it, [then] goes to Council.”

“So I'm okay with the way the wording is, I'd be curious to see what it was in the past [report], but I suspect it is not going to be much different than this,” said Councillor Gallo.

The terms of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee will be revised to remove the duty of supporting and advising Town staff on initiatives and matters relating to the Planning and Development Services of the Town, including Trails, Traffic and Engineering, in order to avoid duplication between committees.

The committee will continue to be composed of 10 members, one member of Council and up to nine citizen members selected by Council, a decision that Town Clerk Mike de Rond said was voted upon last week.

The current Terms of Reference says “up to nine” members, which gives Council leeway to appoint fewer citizen members to the committee but still gives them the option of appointing more if needed.

Ward 2 Councillor Rachel Gilliland agreed that she likes having the option of appointing more members if needed, in order to have a diverse group of people, opinions, and contributions.

By Elisa Nguyen