

New four-way stops coming to Wells Street following Council approval

New all-way stops will soon be coming to Wells Street at its intersections with Harrison and Connaught Avenues.

The traffic calming measures, which were touted to Council earlier this summer by area residents, received the green light from lawmakers after surveys of residents found "more than 80 per cent" support for the controls.

While Council approved the bylaw last week, it was far from a unanimous decision as some Councillors questioned the process of having a resident survey the neighbours and others wondered whether electioneering was at play.

"The survey was completed about a week ago and it was positive with overwhelming support, over 80 per cent for the all-way stops at both Connaught and Harrison," said Marco Ramunno, Aurora's Director of Planning. "Those questions [approved earlier by Council for the survey] were posed and 25 of the 31 respondents wanted the all-way stops at both streets. Two identified only the one-way stop at Connaught and no one said they didn't want any stops. It was over 80 per cent for both intersections to have four-way stops."

But, according to Councillor Rachel Gilliland, some residents that could be impacted by the all-way stops were not informed.

"Some of the concerns was whether or not they were notified, even though they don't live on Wells, but they felt they weren't notified," she said.

Mr. Ramunno responded that the Town's Traffic Analyst identified 33 properties on Wells from Metcalfe to Kennedy and they got responses from 31.

This did not go far enough for Councillor Gilliland who said when she advocated for a stop sign in her neighbourhood prior to her election, she was told by Town Staff she would have to cast a wider net in her citizen survey of residents.

"I had to give all options to everybody of what they wanted," she said. "I don't want this to blow up on our faces. I already have one person, I don't want to be ticking off other people because they feel we didn't do our jobs to at least consult with them. It's not that I'm against what we're doing?it's the fact I want to make sure that at least we're asking everybody on the street fairly."

"Just based on my own experience having canvassed for a stop sign and whatnot, and the grounds I had to canvass?if it is unclear, maybe we need to make these policies a little more clear and consistent so we have something to fall on."

The survey itself was also questioned by Councillor John Gallo who said he didn't believe the intent of the motion passed earlier this month by Council to survey the balance of the impacted residents was to give it to a neighbour to finish the job.

"A third-party, non-biased, go-knock-on-doors, say these are your options, let me write it down?and then go on to the next house," he said. "The direction was that staff do the survey."

This, however, was not the case, argued Councillor Sandra Humfries, who got the ball rolling on the Wells Street measures.

"The resident usually does the petitioning," she said.

"You're never going to make everyone happy, but at the end of the day what we're trying to do here is make the streets safer with that two stop signs on Wells Street," she continued. "There is already a stop sign at Harrison and Connaught so it is just the one strip to provide some safety and some safety measures. Why are we highlighting this street now as a big, suspicious deal and not another huge opportunity that we did on Wellington and Leslie [to petition the Region for more stoplights]. I don't understand what's happening here. Is it because it is my motion? Is it that time of year? I guess it is. You guys vote the way you want."

Councillor Gilliland said her decision and comments were not 'reflective of the season of election-time.'

'At any point at all do I want to feel like any of my decision-making now has to be 'let's make nice because it's election time.' I am just simply trying to voice an opinion based on the information that is set before me. It has been made clear now from staff that if this is the current policy in place that it is the staff's purview to decide where that line is drawn with respect to where the policy? that's the policy that staff has decided, so unfortunately at a later date I will probably put forward a motion to revise that policy to make it clear. That's why I am responding to some of the things that I've heard from people who felt they weren't informed.'

By Brock Weir
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