

Bungalow development concerns Georgetown residents

By Lisa Tallyn
ltallyn@theifp.ca



in the garage and two in the driveway. Three visitor parking spaces are proposed for the site. The property has been vacant since 2010.

The applicant is seeking reductions in the front yard setback from 4.5 metres to 1 metre for the five units on Mountainview, rear yard setback from 4.5 metres to 3.9 metres for four units, a side yard setback from 4.5 metres to 4 metres for one of the units and the setback between the private garage and private condominium road from 6 metres to 5.5 metres for three units.

John Adams, who lives right beside the property, raised concerns about the proposed change in setbacks.

"The backs of these houses will be right on my property line, which is going to cause shading and a concern with being too close," said Adams.

He's also worried about water runoff and wants to know what will happen with the easement on the property. Town senior planner Jeff

Markowiak said the development wouldn't encroach on the easement. He said there's a substantial setback to the north of the property— approximately 14 metres, and the rear yard setback will be a maximum of about 6.5 metres narrowing to 3.9 metres. He added Town staff are aware of the retaining walls and are satisfied the development will be a significant distance away.

"But we will look to address whether there's a possibility of moving any of those structures farther away from any retaining walls," said Markowiak.

The Town has also received concerns from two residents about the potential for increased traffic congestion. The applicant submitted a traffic impact statement, which Town staff will review.

"Right now they've identified no concerns with the information provided in support of the proposal, but I will ensure staff reviews that considering the concerns raised by the public," said the planner.

So far the Town hasn't received any objections to the proposal from agencies and departments that have been circulated, however, some have provided comments and conditions to be addressed as part of the future staff report to Council on the application. Council will vote on the proposal at that time.

Region satisfied appropriate action taken on woodlot; admits to miscommunication

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"A good chunk of the work was done before we even knew what was going on. Our issue is had they consulted with us prior to doing the work, we could have had some input into it and involved our own experts. (The Region) did acknowledge that their communication was poor, but that's easy to say after the fact. What's done is done and we're not bringing back any trees. They didn't like my suggestion that if this was south Oakville, there's no way in hell that this would've happened."

Gorjup and several other residents contacted Halton Region and the Town of Halton Hills as the Newmarket-based forestry firm Silv-Econ, which was contracted to remove the damaged trees, continued its work.

The cutting came to a halt late last week after Halton Hills Mayor Rick Bonnette and Halton Hills Wards 3&4 Regional Councillor Jane Fogal toured the site and shared their concern about the "drastic" extent of the tree removal that was taking place.

A meeting was held Monday morning on the site involving about 10 residents, Halton Region's Commissioner of Public Works Jim Harnum, the regional forester and a forestry consultant.

They explained that the condition of many of the birch and cedar trees warranted their removal due to safety concerns to Region staff members and the public, as well as to enhance the forests' health in the long term by thinning out the dead trees and vegetation.



Local residents were startled by the logs piled up as the woodlot was cleared. Photo by Wyatt Brooks

The woodlot serves as a source water recharge area and houses several regional water wells and extends well back from Princess Anne Dr., covering approximately 12 acres.

"Along with viewing the condition of the woodlot and reviewing the woodlot sustainability plan, I am satisfied that the activities taking place are appropriate to improve the health of the woodlot, minimize risk to the public and property, and maximizing the benefits provided by a healthy and sustainable woodlot," said Harnum in a letter to local residents, while also apologizing that the initial letter residents received "did not fully explain the work to be undertaken and I have asked staff to take this into consideration for any future woodlot maintenance activities that are planned."

Harnum added that a remediation plan is in place to plant four-to-five-foot seedlings and bring in other more mature trees to return the area to woodlot status.

Fogal, also attended Monday's meeting on the lot and for the most part was satisfied with their explanation for the mass cut-down, but hopes to hold another meeting with residents in the next couple of weeks to discuss the remediation work.

"I completely understand why people were very upset because the letter that went to them talked about cleanup from the ice storm, but what happened was much more than anybody would've expected," she said.

"If I had known what was going on we would have had a community meeting before it started to explain what had to be done. People thought there were ulterior motives with something bad planned, but that's not the case at all. It's quite expensive for the Region to do that work and it had to be done largely for safety reasons."

For his part, Gorjup isn't completely buying the explanation and has requested copies of the consultant's and forester's report, along with the contract between the Region and Silv-Econ.

"I think when you're working for the taxpayer, you should bend over backwards, especially if you assume that the public isn't going to be pissed off when you start cutting down trees," he said. "The Region has a Guidelines for Good Forestry Practices tree-cutting bylaw, but apparently the bylaw is not applicable to the Region itself."

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