

Neighbours clash, granny flat location splits them

By BRAD REAUME
The Champion

Charles Taylor argued eloquently for the view. Brenna Morrison-Martel was just as convincing, pleading for her property rights and moral obligation to an aging relative.

With strong feelings on both sides, town council agreed last week that Ms Morrison-Martel's application to build a 671-square foot granny flat should be studied further before a decision on zoning changes will be made. The process will take several weeks.

Ms Morrison-Martel lives on Conway Court while Mr. Taylor lives on Marcellus Avenue. Both properties have a view of Laurier Park, though Mr. Taylor must look across the back of Ms Martel's property to see it.

Mr. Taylor explained he and his wife Barbara have always lived where they had a view of open space, and said his desire to continue that "is not something to be dismissed lightly." He claimed he would be forced from his current home if the granny flat was built and his view blocked.

Ms Morrison-Martel said her family chose to build a granny flat rather than simply bring in a trailer because it would look much nicer. The dwelling will be about 12 feet high.

"They (the neighbours) probably don't want to hear that we had planned to put in a gazebo and mature trees which would grow much higher than 12 feet," Ms Morrison-Martel said.

Mr. Taylor estimated a \$30,000 loss in property value and argued that by allowing a granny flat council was setting a precedent which could

lead to a proliferation of such structures and a corresponding strain on local water, sewer and transportation services.

"The view is the major element of why I bought my house. This structure will take that away," Mr. Taylor said. "I'll have to sell. I won't sit and watch this. This is my house, my life savings, my home ... if you don't think this hits a nerve ..."

His comments were followed by substantial applause among the more than 40 people in the gallery. Ms Morrison-Martel received similar applause after her speech to council.

Council heard Ms Morrison-Martel could build a similar structure, such as a pool house, without council approval. In fact she could legally build a much larger structure.

She could also put on a similar sized addition

to the main house without having the zoning changed.

Several neighbours suggested adding to the home was the preferred option but Ms Morrison-Martel said such an addition would block her view and would force the removal of a pond and several trees in a landscaped area.

Ms Morrison-Martel said as up to 25 per cent of Canadians are expected to provide living space for aging parents.

"I say this to my neighbours: I hope you or your children don't find yourself in the same situation. I hope you are not part of the 25 per cent."

The issue will be reviewed by the planning department, incorporating concerns raised at the public meeting last week. A full report and recommendation will follow in several weeks.

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