



Subject: Bert Newman Park Fencing

Report Number: RCP 24-032

Committee Name: Parks, Beautification & Cemeteries Committee

Submitted by: Margaret Puhr, Committee Secretary

Meeting Type: Council Meeting

Meeting Date: Monday, July 8, 2024

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT report titled “Bert Newman Park Fencing” be received as information; and
- B. THAT Council approve the recommendation of the Parks, Beautification & Cemeteries Advisory Committee as follows:
 - a. THAT the Parks, Beautification & Cemeteries Advisory Committee strongly recommend to Council that the fence surrounding the perimeter of Bert Newman Park remain in place, and
 - b. THAT Council consider repairs, i.e. refurbishing the fence in 2025 budget; and
 - c. THAT the committee also recommends that Council seek options from staff to re-engage locking the fence in the later evening hours.

BACKGROUND

On July 17, 2023 Deputy Mayor Beres made the following Motion:

16.4 Bert Newman Park – Deputy Mayor Beres

Resolution # 2023-310

- A. *THAT staff be directed to deploy vandalism reduction tactics within Bert Newman Park, and where possible, increase patrol of the location both from Parks and By-Law enforcement staff; and*
- B. *THAT staff identify the vandalism to the Tillsonburg branch of the OPP and request any additional patrols that could be made available; and*
- C. *THAT staff be directed to procure the tree gates for Bert Newman Park in accordance with the Town’s Purchasing Policy funded from the 2022 year-end surplus, and report the total costs in the 2022 year-end surplus; and*
- D. *THAT staff consider any other items that could increase the protection of the park within their 2024 budgets; and*
- E. *THAT staff review a potential vandalism by-law and enforcement and present a report to Council.*

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Carried

Followed on February 12, 2024 by a Motion from Councillor Rosehart:

17.1 Councillor Rosehart – Bert Newman Park

Resolution # 2024-084

WHEREAS at their July 17, 2023 meeting, Tillsonburg Town Council passed a resolution to secure the gates of Bert Newman Park nightly due to an increase of vandalism; and

WHEREAS vandalism has decreased due to the winter weather; and

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED

THAT the gates of Bern Newman Park be unlocked so that the park can be fully reopened to use by residents; and

THAT the Director of Recreation, Culture and Parks be permitted to lock and unlock the gates at their discretion if any further issues arise.

Carried

Followed on May 27, 2024 by a Motion from Councillor Luciani:

11.1 RCP 23-023 Parks, Beautification and Cemeteries Committee Recommendation – Bert Newman Park Fencing

Resolution # 2024-261

- A. THAT report titled Bert Newman Park Fencing be received as information; and*
- B. THAT Council approve the recommendation of the Parks, Beautification & Cemeteries Committee and direct staff to remove three sides of fencing around Bern Newman Park and complete remediation efforts through beautification of the park upon passing of the Parks Use By-Law.*

Carried

DISCUSSION

The Bert Newman Park issues including, but not limited to, vandalism, illicit drug use and anti-social behavior has been observed since 2023 until locking of the park gates was implemented, with Council's direction. The locking of the gates appears to have achieved the desired result of discouraging the above mentioned behaviours.

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Subsequently, following a presentation and proposal from the Horticultural Society to the Parks, Beautification & Cemeteries Committee, the recommendation was made and approved by Council to remove three sides of the wrought-iron fence surrounding the park and to apply remedies using beautification in effort to discourage using the park for rough sleeping and other undesirable activities – following passing of the Parks Use By-Law.

A letter was prepared by staff and delivered to neighbouring residences informing of this resolution and intent. Upon receiving the letter, several neighbours of the park contacted the RCP staff, objecting to the proposed fence removal for aesthetic and ability to control access to the park reasons.

On June 25, 2024, a group of the park neighbours attended as a delegation to the Parks, Beautification & Cemeteries Committee meeting and presented their experiences, urging the committee to seek reversal of the fence removal as well as petition to re-instate locking of the park overnight.

The Committee agreed with this proposal and is seeking Council's direction to leave the fence in place and allow for its repairs or replacement in the 2025 budget. The replacement cost is approximately \$35,000.00, the cost of restoration of the existing wrought-iron fencing is unknown at this time.

Council Procedure Note

Agreeing to the Committees decision would not be considered a procedural Reconsideration as staff have taken action (letter to neighbourhood) on the latest direction from Council. The condition of the Parks Use By-law enactment has not yet been met. Council can choose to re-direct staff to leave the fence in place with a 2025 budget consideration for repairs if that is the desire. If Council wishes to proceed with the removal, Clause B of the report would be removed to provide no alternative direction to staff.

CONSULTATION

This report has been prepared in consultation with the Acting Director of Recreation, Culture & Parks, Manager of Parks and Facilities and the Parks, Beautification & Cemeteries Advisory Committee.

FINANCIAL IMPACT/FUNDING SOURCE

This will be proposed for 2025 budget. The cost of replacing the fence is approximately \$35,000.00, the cost of repair to the existing fence to be determined.

CORPORATE GOALS

- Lifestyle and amenities
- Customer service, communication and engagement
- Business attraction, retention and expansion
- Community growth
- Connectivity and transportation
- Not Applicable

Does this report relate to a specific strategic direction or project identified in the Community Strategic Plan? Please indicate section number and/or any priority projects identified in the plan.

Goal – Within the community, Tillsonburg will strive to offer residents the amenities, services and attractions they require to enjoy balanced lifestyles.

Strategic Direction – N/A

Priority Project – N/A

ATTACHMENTS

N/A