

Bylaw review will look at regulating pigeons

By Bill Rea

There are some who seem to think a subject like regulating pigeons in Caledon is for the birds.

But Councillor Johanna Downey pointed out the Town's bylaw regulating the keeping of animals doesn't deal with pigeons, and she thought municipal staff should look into that.

Town councillors, sitting in committee, recently approved her motion, but tacked on an amendment that the entire bylaw be reviewed this year.

There were some comments around the council table that there are more pressing issues facing the Town.

Councillor Annette Groves pointed out the Town recently got through dealing with allowing residents to keep hens in their back yards, commenting that issue took up a lot of staff time and resources.

‘Does it end?’ she asked, adding the Town is facing a lot of issues. ‘Here we are, going here again, talking about pigeons.’

Groves added the feedback she's been hearing from the public has been negative, as people look at the time and resources being wasted.

‘We have more pressing issues that we need to deal with,’ she declared.

Councillor Barb Shaughnessy wondered if the plan was to address issues dealing with one animal or species at a time.

Downey's motion stated the Canadian Pigeons Fanciers' Association's aims include fostering greater interest in breeding the birds, and demonstrating the benefits of raising them as a hobby.

But Shaughnessy said she contacted the association and found there's one registered member in Caledon, and that person lives in her ward. She also said she contacted the bylaw department, and they had heard no complaints raised about this person.

She said one issue is that birds need exercise, so some people would just let them fly around the neighborhood, where they can defecate on other people's properties. Other people put birds in cars and drive them some distance away and let them fly home.

Shaughnessy also said she had been told a review of the bylaw had been planned for 2019, so he wondered why the issue had come up at this time.

Town Clerk Carey deGorter told councillor Nick deBoer the Town gets two or three complaints per year regarding pigeons. She added there are municipalities where they are regulated, but there are currently no regulations in Caledon.

She also said a lot of research was done when dealing with the residential hens issue.

DeGorter also said the animal control bylaw is out of date, as it really only addresses dogs and cats, and now hens.

DeBoer suggested the review of the bylaw be moved up to this year, as part of the 2018 work plan.

Councillor Rob Mezzapelli wasn't in favour of that, arguing the review could wait until 2019. ‘We're going to get to it,’ he said.

Shaughnessy argued staff has more important matters to address.

Groves didn't like the idea of changing the work plan, commented the bylaw staff is planning a holistic review in 2019.

‘I'm not sure what the big rush is here,’ she added.

But deBoer argued it's Council's prerogative to adjust the work plan, also citing deGorter's observation the bylaw is out of date.

DeGorter told Councillor Jennifer Innis staff could change the work plan if Council directed that. She added a lot of preliminary work was done when dealing with the hen issue.

Councillor Doug Beffort said it's important that it be a fulsome review. He also said it could start this year and be concluded in 2019.

‘It's not a priority,’ Groves replied.

‘We don't want to beat these dead pigeons either,’ Shaughnessy commented.

She also observed her colleagues had passed a motion she made earlier in the meeting to have the Town look at ways to eliminate the potential nuisances that could be created from the production of cannabis, once it's legalized, and that was passed without discussion. She said people living near such operations have more to worry about than people inconvenienced by ‘pigeon poop.’

Innis countered she's always told staff a pot hole might not be a big issue to them, but it is to a resident who drives over it every day. She added the same would apply to people bothered by pigeons and grow operations. To say one is more important than the other is not fair, because councillors are not the ones who have to live with it.

Staff had said the bylaw is to be reviewed in 2019, but Innis said there was no problem raised with dealing with it this year.

‘That's our responsibility,’ she declared, adding if staff says it has the time and resources to do the job, that has to be respected.

Innis also said she had heard from a resident who wants to keep a pot-bellied pig.

‘I think we should look at it proactively,’ she said.