

Hello, my name is Daphne Rappard, and I am here on behalf of the Mount Forest Green Team. I am accompanied by John Jeffery, Karen Waschinski, Joy Koehler, Claudette Stevens, Ann Plume, Brad Andrews, Marlin Herriot and Bob Hill.

The Green Team, formed several years ago, is a group of concerned citizens working towards protecting and enhancing our local environment, and is dedicated to keeping Mount Forest green. Concerned about the ongoing loss of municipal trees to accommodate construction projects, we launched a contest last year, dubbed My Most Awesome Tree, to raise awareness of our remaining beautiful old trees. This year we have embarked on inventorizing our municipal trees, with our ultimate goal being that a bylaw be created to protect them, and to improve our tree canopy. One of our early observations was that the trees at the Mount Forest cemetery are mostly sugar maples well over a century old. Little attention has been given to succession planning or planting. Perhaps the Township, in conjunction with the funeral home, could encourage that memorial trees be planted there.

Our main role today though is to be at Council to raise awareness that we cannot continue to do business as usual. We need to address the reality of climate change and take seriously our responsibility as stewards of this fragile earth to limit our impact. And so we want to work together with the Township of Wellington North to effect positive change.

The Municipal Act Section 270 (1) (7) states clearly that “a municipality SHALL adopt and maintain policies to determine how they will protect and enhance tree canopy and natural vegetation in the municipality.” The only obvious policy Wellington North has in this regard is a Tree Removal Policy, with no clear criteria.

Today, we want to express our specific concerns about the proposed 2024 reconstruction of John Street and Fergus Street North. And in this, I don't only speak on behalf of our Green Team, but a very large number of concerned citizens of Mount Forest, and beyond. The preliminary engineering plans show a very rigid style of reconstruction, where everything is at 90° angles and linear, with no regard for existing vegetation such as trees.

The Green Team's focus has mainly been on the Fergus Street North proposal, but we've heard so many comments about John Street, that I feel I need to mention this too. Most of these people feel very strongly that it should not be the Township's responsibility to accommodate a business that has outgrown its space, and that taxpayers should not have to foot this bill. Short of moving the business, the alternative of creating a one-way street on John St between Queen Street and Waterloo Street would alleviate traffic woes better than the proposed plan, save the trees and people's property frontage, and save almost \$1.8 million to help bring the proposed tax increase below 5%.

I addressed Council in 2020/2021 with my personal concerns re the alarming rate at which trees were being taken down, and subsequently received a copy of a report from the CAO at that time, stating, “During road, sidewalk or underground infrastructure projects, trees must be removed to facilitate the works, and in many instances replanting a tree in the same or nearby

location is prohibitive.” This is a mindset that cannot be tolerated in this era of climate change emergency.

Many other cities and towns have stringent bylaws/policies whereby everything possible is done to preserve the tree canopy. Cities like Toronto, Burlington and Oakville all have such bylaws. Closer to home, Centre Wellington has a great Public Forest Policy. Recently, a headline in the Stratford Beacon read, “Stratford Council puts tree preservation above cost for Argyle Street construction.”

Yes, alternatives exist, and they’re not necessarily more expensive. Directional (horizontal) drilling should be explored, as should the use of permeable pavers.

We are so fortunate to have the experience and knowledge of Manuela Demedeiros on our Green Team. Manuela, an ISA certified arborist, works for the City of Toronto Urban Forestry Department, and has experience with this sort of construction. She’s also the mom of a newborn, and although it was her intention to be here tonight to provide technical information, baby Hazel had other ideas. However, being on maternity leave, Manuela is willing to offer her time as a consultant.

If she were here, she would tell you that directional drilling is less invasive, reduces environmental disturbance (much of the old infrastructure need not be removed), involves less cleanup and is faster. Permeable pavers decrease water flowing into storm drains, filter out pollutants, are sustainable and durable, and accommodate trees. A geotextile grid would provide strength and stability re load bearing. And no, trees do not cause cracks in pipes; their roots only seek out water in already cracked pipes!

We are concerned that the engineering plans were created without the input of a certified arborist or environmental/ ecological consultant. The Township needs to do its due diligence when deciding to spend taxpayers’ money and be able to stand behind decisions made. It has been disappointing that follow-up with residents is lacking (a request by an affected property owner at the public meeting a month ago for the cost of paving that part of Fergus Street a few years ago has gone unanswered, as has a request for a copy of the plans).

The Ontario Provincial Policy Statement 1.6.1 and 1.6.2 declares that planning authorities should promote green infrastructure: “Infrastructure and public service facilities shall be provided in an efficient manner that prepares for the impact of a changing climate while accommodating projected needs.” And in Section 1.6.6.7c, “Planning for stormwater management shall minimize erosion and changes in water balance, and prepare for the impact of changing climate through the effective management of stormwater, including the use of green infrastructure”, which includes natural and human made elements, including street trees and permeable surfaces, such as permeable pavers and grass (unlike the paved boulevard on William Street that used expensive, unnecessary, environmentally-unfriendly asphalt).

But not only do we have an environmental responsibility, we have one to the heritage of our beautiful Mount FOREST. Many of the residents on Fergus Street North bought their houses because of the trees. Although most of the trees were planted on municipal land, almost all of them now extend onto private property, and, as per the Forestry Act, have become Boundary Trees. In Section 10 of the Ontario Forestry Act, a boundary tree is defined as “a tree with a portion of a trunk on one property and another on another property”, and a trunk is defined as including the canopy of branches, leaves and foliage. It makes it a prosecutable offence to injure or destroy a boundary tree without the consent of both property owners.

I know that not all the trees can be saved, or even should be saved. But replanting needs to be taken much more seriously than the Township of Wellington North offering property owners a replacement tree. A 100+ year old sugar maple capturing upwards of 150 kg of carbon CANNOT be replaced by a single sapling. Guidelines must be put in place re planting ratios, as well as follow-up care of replacement trees.

Having said all this, it is not our intent to be confrontational. We want to be able to work together with the Township of Wellington North. We feel we have energy, experience and passion on our side, and we've been able to reach out to others willing to help. Just before I came tonight, I had a call from Liz Benneian, who saw our article in Guelph Today. She was instrumental in developing Oakville's tree bylaws, and is willing to help us. Centre Wellington's Neighbourhoods and Tree Trust are an invaluable source of information and support as well. So now is the time for us to embrace the TWN motto SEMPER PORRO, and move ever forward!

Thank you.

(I also submit to you a petition that was started on Friday, with over 200 names of people requesting a hold be put on the reconstruction of John St and Fergus St N until alternatives are thoroughly investigated.)

(And by the way, the name of our campaign is 'Keep the forest in Mount FOREST!')