

**BOULEVARD MAINTENANCE TASK FORCE
CANADA ROOM, MARKHAM CIVIC CENTRE
APRIL 12, 2011
12:30 P.M.**

MINUTES

Attendance:

<p>Members Present: Deputy Mayor Jack Heath Regional Councillor Gord Landon, Chair Regional Councillor Joe Li Councillor Alex Chiu</p> <p>Councillors Present: Councillor Colin Campbell Councillor Alan Ho Councillor Carolina Moretti Councillor Howard Shore</p> <p>Regrets: Regional Councillor Jim Jones Steve Matunin, Supervisor, Operations</p>	<p>Staff Present: Rhonda Bosch, Senior Manager, Shared Services Paul Ingham, General Manager, Operation Mark Ingwersen, West District Manager, Operations Linda Irvine, Manager, Parks and Open Spaces Development Catherine Jay, Manager, Urban Design Brian Lee, Senior Manager, Development, Engineering & Transportation Brenda Librecz, Commissioner of Community & Fire Services John Livey, Chief Administrative Officer Joel Lustig, Treasurer</p> <p>Sara Tam, Manager, Business Planning & Innovation Andy Taylor, Commissioner of Corporate Services Bill Wiles, Manager, By-Law Enforcement & Licensing Laura Gold, Council/Committee Coordinator</p> <p>York Region Staff Present: Joseph Petrungaro, Manager, Roads Maintenance Kathleen Llewellyn-Thomas, Commissioner, Transportation Services</p>
---	---

The Boulevard Maintenance Task Force convened at 12:33 p.m. with Regional Councillor Gord Landon presiding as Chair.

1. INTRODUCTIONS

Ms. Brenda Librecz, Commissioner of Community Services & Fire, introduced the staff members of the Boulevard Maintenance Task Force. She advised that the purpose of today's meeting is to provide a high level overview of boulevard maintenance and a work plan. A binder with supplementary information was distributed to the taskforce.

2. STAFF PRESENTATION & DISCUSSION

Mr. Paul Ingham, General Manager, Operations, provided a presentation entitled "Boulevard Maintenance Task Force. The mandate for the Task Force is as follows: to review boulevard maintenance on both regional and local roads, with the goal of improving aesthetics and weed control. The Task Force will bring forward recommendations to Council for maintaining boulevards on Town and Regional roads based on best practices.

Currently, the Town cuts both local and regional boulevards fourteen (14) cuts per year. The Region currently reimburses for eleven (11) cuts per year, but is currently proposing to increase its financial assistance to fourteen (14) cuts per year. If the Region approves an increase in service level the Town will have additional resources to maintain boulevards across the Town. Currently, boulevard mowing is done 100% in-house. This is achieved by using seasonal staff.

There are nine (9) trim crews in April, September and October and seventeen (17) trim crews from May to August. In accordance with the study conducted by Marshall Macklin Monaghan on turf maintenance, weeds often provide green cover where grass will not grow due to salt damage and compaction. This practice was seen to be acceptable by residents as long as the grass is mowed regularly.

In 2010, trim crew routes and staff were re-allocated to provide more consistent service levels across the Town. Using this approach, services levels were met 81% of the time. In 2011, further changes to crew routes and staff allocation have been made to improve performance indicator results to over 90%.

The following strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats analysis of boulevards was conducted:

Strengths

- Staff are engaged and committed to doing a good job;
- The current process for caring for boulevards reduces travel time;
- A consistent level of service is provided across Town;
- The Town is already cutting boulevards fourteen (14) per year;
- The Town is providing equal level of service for both local and regional roads;

Weaknesses

- The Town receives limited financial assistance from Region;
- Currently, there is a lack of inspections/testing of soil quality and quantity in new subdivisions;
- There are limited staff available in April, September and October to maintain the boulevards;
- Dandelions on boulevards are difficult to control and cultural practices on boulevards are too expensive. Staff will review mowing frequency and what other municipalities are doing to address this issue;

Opportunities

- Look at more ways to engage staff and for ways to make service improvements;
- The Town can pass a By-law for boulevard maintenance on abutting private properties. A sample by-law was requested to be brought to the next meeting. The Town should start with providing warnings. Staff will work with Corporate Communications & Community Relations to establish a communication and public education plan;
- Have the Region increase its financial assistance;
- Create a cross commission team to address boulevard issues in new developments ;
- Organize a discussion with the City of Toronto regarding Steeles Avenue and service levels for maintaining boulevards. Regional Staff requested to be included in this discussion.

Threats

- Due to an increase in urbanization, less landowners are cutting the grass on boulevards (e.g. home owners of Town homes with little to no grass may not have a lawnmower);
- The increase in population creates more wear and tear on turf areas resulting in higher weed populations.

There was an inquiry if there is by-law stipulating when private landowners should start their spring clean-up. This inquiry was referred to the Manager of By-laws and Enforcement.

It was requested that the Community Services staff work with the Development Services Commission to determine options for boulevards in new subdivisions. This should include a review of both the quality of soil and the depth of the soil used by developers. Staff were also requested to think of options for reducing the number of dandelions.

It was clarified that the Town typically relies on the public to report a tree overhanging from a private property that is blocking the sidewalk. This would be handled by advising the private property owner that a staff member will be sent to trim the branch. A new process was recently implemented, which has staff fill out a worksheet when they notice anything that should be addressed while mowing (e.g. a missing sign or a tree that has fallen down). The worksheet is then submitted to the supervisor who will issue a work order.

The Next Steps included: providing best practices from other municipalities, including possible alternative plant material; possibly obtaining input from resident groups; and reviewing service levels; and bringing forward a report to Council with recommendations in June of 2011.

Moved by Councillor Howard Shore

Seconded by Alex Chiu

That the Boulevard Task Force adjourn at 1:50 p.m.

CARRIED.