

# New tree bylaw sprouts in North Vancouver District

## District of North Vancouver council has approved a new tree bylaw even as councillors and residents voiced concerns the changes don't go far enough

BY TESSA HOLLOWAY, NORTH SHORE NEWS JULY 24, 2011

The new bylaw will give homeowners the final say in whether to cut down a healthy, large tree on their property, but anyone seeking a permit will need to either replace the tree or pay a \$500 fee.

Trees on district land, on steep slopes and near streams remain protected from the axe, however a permit can be obtained to prune a district tree that overhangs a property.

The bylaw also allows residents to have an arborist declare a tree a hazard, waiving the requirement to replace trees or pay a fine.

Mayor Richard Walton said the changes strike a balance between protecting the treed character of the district and the desire of residents to have freedom over their own land. He said the main goal of staff wouldn't be to punish offenders but to work with residents, especially to find options that can save trees.

Coun. Roger Bassam said he would prefer fewer regulations, but described the new regulations as a major improvement over the previous bylaw, which left no option for residents wanting to cut down a large or protected tree if district staff felt there was no danger.

While most councillors supported the change, Couns. Mike Little and Doug Mackay-Dunn opposed it, arguing the new changes don't go far enough in giving homeowners control over their property.

Little took issue with the section that states no resident can apply for a permit to remove a protected tree - that is, a tree in a stream, on a slope or on district land - for reasons of sunlight, view or to address needle drop or pine cones. He said it's "none of our business" what residents' reasons are for wanting to remove a tree, and argued residents should be able to at least apply for a permit.

Little also said the \$500 fee to remove a tree was unnecessary and that a separate \$1,000 penalty for not replanting replacement trees should be lowered. Finally, Little said the bylaw was too vague in how to deal with trees on the property line and ought to explicitly allow for regular maintenance of trees.

Mackay-Dunn argued the definition of a stream was too vague, as it includes any ditch or watercourse even if dry.

Several residents also spoke against aspects of the bylaw, including John Hunter. While Hunter said staff had addressed several of his previous concerns and thanked council for loosening the rules, but argued residents shouldn't have to seek a permit to trim a district tree that overhangs their property, and said residents should be able to remove any tree that's damaging their property.

Staff plan to return the bylaw to council for final adoption in about six months.

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