

Subject: Changes to Recreation Vehicle/Boat Regulations

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Mayor & Council:

Suppose I would like to build a structure in the front yard of my property, say a modest garage. The process would necessitate drafting building plans to be submitted to the District in order to receive a permit. The proposed structure would have to be in compliance with all Zoning Bylaw regulations with respect to maximum size, front and sideyard setbacks, and height limitations. If the configuration of my property prevented me from building the garage within the Zoning Bylaw, I would have the option of applying for a variance, a process that would give my immediate neighbours the opportunity to comment or express any concerns on how the structure might affect their own properties.

Now consider the parking and storage of recreational vehicles. During the discussion of this issue last night, at least three members of Council expressed the opinion that the parking and/or storing such vehicles in front yards be permitted with no regulations other than the Nuisance Abatement Bylaw which governs untidy premises. Unbelievable. It was fortunate that the majority of Council saw fit to adopt the new bylaw, even though it is weaker than the old regulations.

Without any restrictions on recreational vehicles a resident could park indefinitely -- as of right -- a massive RV or trailer (some are 40-feet long and 12 feet high, the size of a tour bus) anywhere in his front yard with no consideration to property line setbacks. Just imagine for a moment living next to such a thing, or looking out your window every day and seeing a huge RV stored in the front yard of the property across the street. Would you be happy about that situation if it occurred to you? How do you think it would affect your ability to sell your property if your neighbour's huge RV dominated the streetscape or was parked right up to your property line? How is it that all members of Council appear to accept Zoning Bylaw regulations limiting the size, shape, and siting of all built structures like carports and garages, yet advocate no limitations for parking and storing recreational vehicles?

During the debate, I listened to a member of Council sympathize with property owners who are unable to park their RVs or boats in their rear yards. Well, at the risk of appearing insensitive, you would think that if someone is going to buy a large RV or boat, then he has a responsibility to consider first and foremost exactly where he plans on storing it. I fail to see why his purchase should become a problem for his neighbours. One member of Council suggested that neighbours should resolve RV parking and storage problems among themselves rather than relying on a bylaw. What a recipe for conflict! The simple fact is, not everyone is reasonable and considerate and that is why we have rules and regulations to fall back on.

Using the Nuisance Abatement Bylaw to regulate the parking and storage of recreational vehicles is fine for addressing unsightly and derelict vehicles, but not for instances where the RV or stored boat is neat and tidy but is otherwise huge and imposing on the neighbours. When this issue is returned to Council next year, I can only hope that common sense will prevail.

Sincerely,
Brian Platts

