

CITY OF VAUGHAN

EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF JUN

Item 42, Report No. 51, of the Committee of the Whole, which was adopted Council of the City of Vaughan on June 23, 2003.

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Communication
CW: Nov 6/12
Item: Dep 6) #21

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**ENCROACHMENT POLICY
CITY ROAD ALLOWANCE**

The Committee of the Whole recommends approval of the recommendation contained in the following report of Councillor Jackson, dated June 16, 2003:

Recommendation

Councillor Linda D. Jackson recommends:

THAT staff be directed to report back to a Committee of the Whole meeting in the Fall of 2003 with a review and recommendations for an Encroachment Policy governing the permitted use of city road allowances.

Purpose

To regulate the permitted uses of city road allowances.

Background - Analysis and Options

There is currently no policy regulating/specifying what alterations and/or construction is permitted/prohibited on city road allowances. There are many examples throughout the City of Vaughan of such alterations as: landscaping (including plantings and paving), walkways, etc.

Conclusion

An Encroachment Policy would clearly define what the City can/cannot enforce with respect to permitted use of city road allowances.

Attachments

None

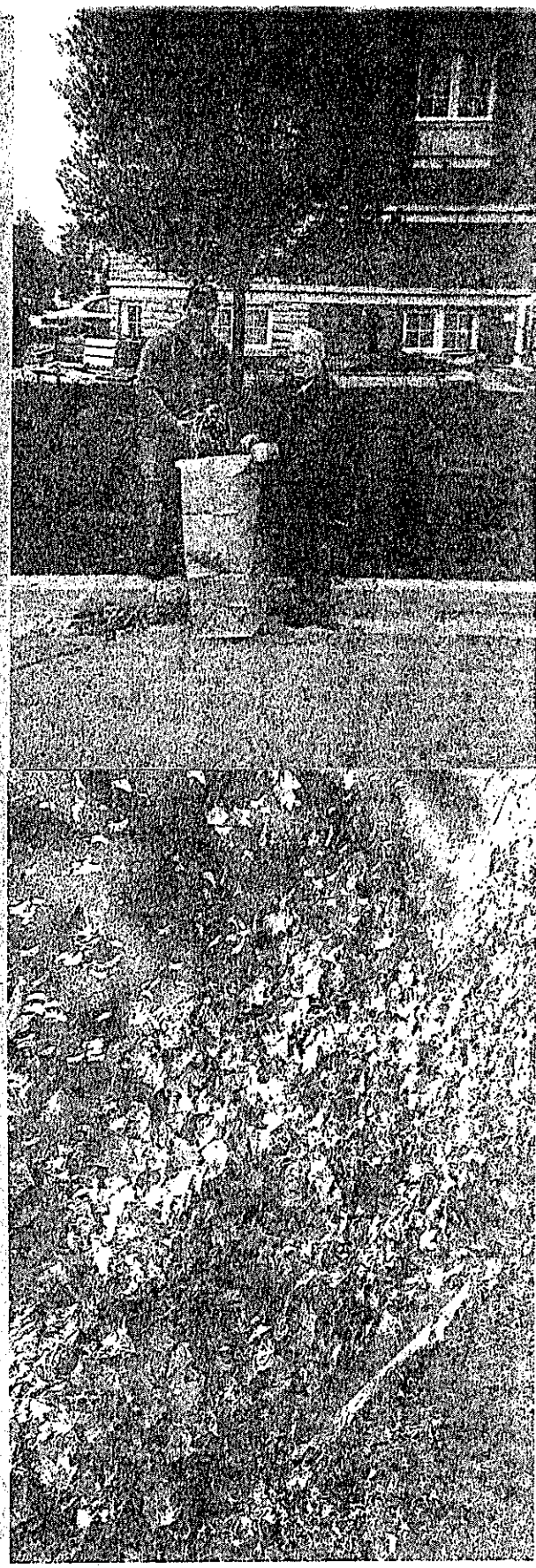
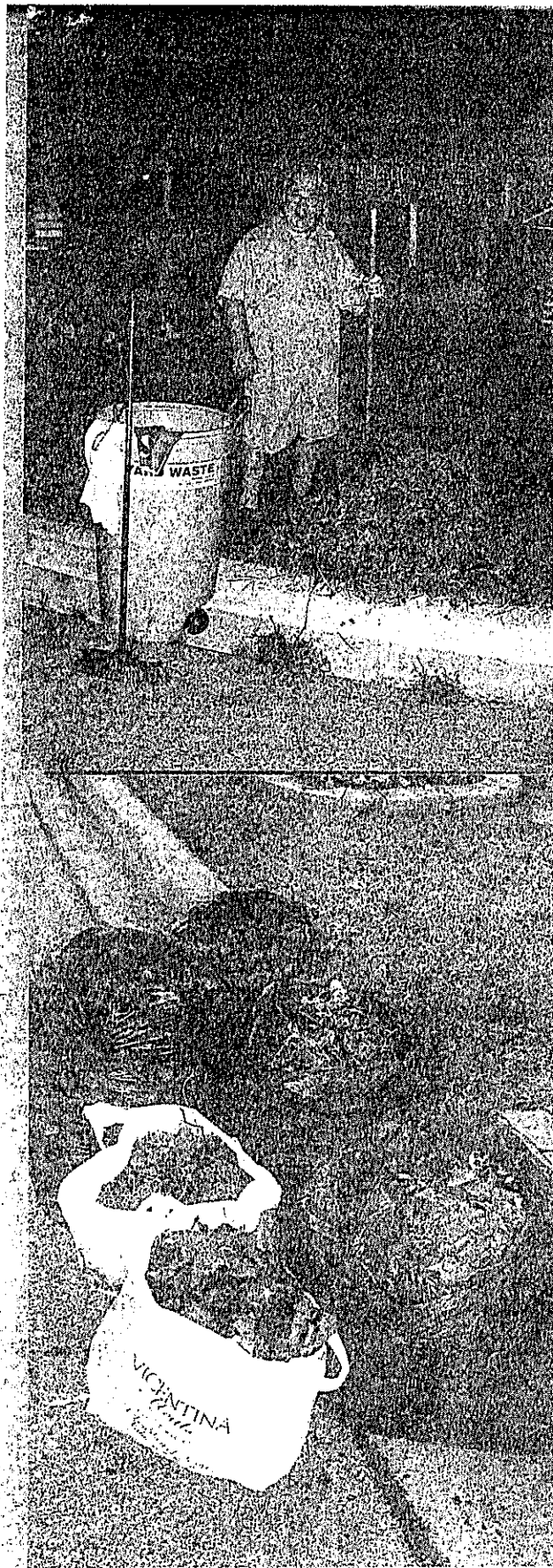
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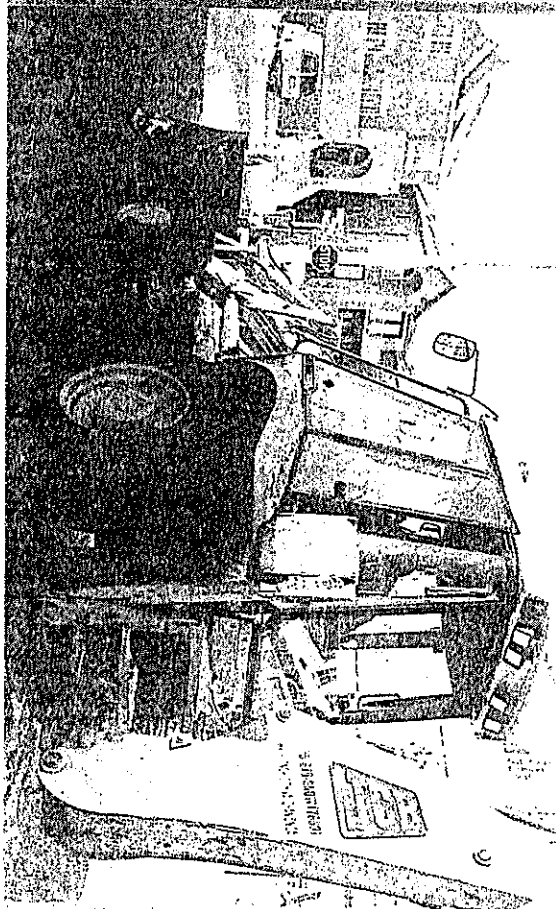
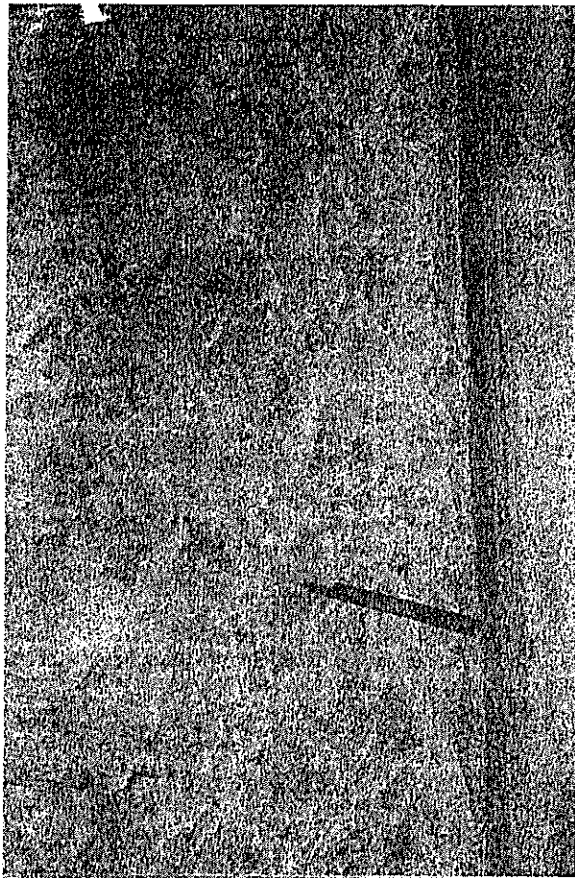
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Councillors to take encroachment issues to city hall for residents

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Conte, who spent about \$500 to modify the retaining brick wall bordering her lawn and flower bed.

The city sent the neighbours violation notices in April, stating that encroachments of any kind on public lands are not permitted. As a result, residents had 30 days to restore the area back to its original condition. In this instance, grass. Residents were also given a second option of submitting an application for the city's encroachment agreement, which allows for use of city-owned property for landscaping and other purposes, filing the application cost resident Anna Balkaran \$200 and it does not guarantee approval.

If I have to make any adjustments to my property it will cost me a lot because I have natural concrete. So I will have to hire a contractor to break that. I cannot

This is a unique situation, but I think the city is going to find a solution. People who live on this street... beautify their homes, and spend a lot of money.

Angelo Del-Bel-Belluz
Homeowner

do it myself. Mr. Balkaran said taking his chances with the encroachment agreement was the more cost-effective approach.

Furthermore, applicants must obtain and maintain an insurance policy in the minimum amount of \$2 million and name the city as an additional insured party.

Over the spring and summer months, the handful of St. Francis Avenue residents opted for amend-

ing their landscaping to acceptable city standards, approximately five feet away from the sidewalk. However, the changes did not fall within the city's orders to comply letter, leaving residents in the same predicament.

Under the current policy you cannot have any encroachment without an encroachment agreement. It does not matter what changes you made. If you do not have an agreement in place, the city can tell you to put the grass back.

said Regional Councillor Gino Rosati, who visited the neighbours with East Woodbridge Councillor

Bernie DiVona on Wednesday. The councillors reiterated that while the bylaws are rigid and allow for no flexibility, the Vellore area is facing issues under a municipal code that does not adequately reflect the more modern Wood-

bridge subdivision.

What happened here is unusual and in this case it does not make sense to us," Mr. DiVona said.

In theory, what is being suggested to you is there is greater risk to the general public because of that encroachment from my perspective, there is no risk to anyone on this street and there is no risk to the municipality," he added.

The councillors remained receptive to the group's concerns, but made no promises other than agreeing to suspend the property violations until the matter can be heard before council.

"When you pass laws, one size fits all does not work all the time. We cannot break the law all the time. We do try to bend the law now into what we intended it to be. This was never the intent of the encroachment law for this area because of

the way it was physically designed," Mr. DiVona said.

If the policy can be modified it could allow for moderate landscaping in areas similar to the subdivision around St. Francis Avenue, Mr. Rosati said.

For the most part, residents welcomed the opportunity to finally meet with Vaughan councillors and remain hopeful a decision will be made in their favour.

"This is a unique situation, but I think the city is going to find a solution. People who live on this street, they beautify their homes, and spend a lot of money. They are upset about this encroachment bylaw. In saying that they do not want to spend another dime," resident Angelo Del-Bel-Belluz said.

The date for the public hearing to discuss the matter has yet to be scheduled.

SPECIAL FEATURE



STAFF PHOTO/SIGERD WITTEVEEN

Allan Goldstein and daughter Andrea, 7, suffer from allergies and say they can't abide the dandelion weeds in Beverley Glen Park running rampant there near Wilshire Elementary School. Daughter Brianna, 10, and family dog Blue don't mind romping through the weeds.

Dandelions not dandy for all

Warm spring, lack of snowmelt let weeds thrive while turf grass struggles, parks and forestry director says

BY KIM ZARZOUR
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Allan Goldstein wouldn't put his child in the middle of a hornet's nest.

And he certainly won't let her play in the local park.

The Thornhill dad believes sending his allergy-prone daughter into Beverly Glen Park would be just about as dangerous, given the knee-high weeds taking over the neglected neighbourhood green space.

And he's mad as a hornet about it.

"I don't care if they have to use old-fashioned push mowers. We pay for these parks to be built. Either we can use them or not. And if we can't use them, then I want a

reduction in my taxes."

The province's cosmetic pesticides ban came into effect on Earth Day, April 22, 2009, an effort to reduce the potential toxic effects

See DANDELIONS, page 17.

Dandelions weeds or flowers?

From page 1

on families and pets. Since then, municipally owned land has turned progressively yellow — bright dandelion yellow — and not everyone is pleased by the sight.

Mr. Goldstein took his dog Blue to the local park for a romp, but after a few steps in, he says he turned around and let the golden retriever sniff around the baseball diamond, instead.

The problem is getting worse and worse. The dandelions are simply multiplying. This particular park was half as bad last year.

Marjie Fraser, Vaughan's director of parks and forestry operations, agrees turf grass weeds grew higher this year.

The warm spring and lack of snowmelt from a mild winter caused a shortage of water in the soil, she said. This caused weeds to thrive and the turf grass to struggle.

As well, several years of a pesticide-free environment created conditions that allow dandelions to successfully compete with grass, she said.

Jody Klapman also isn't happy with the result, and she's noticed other neighbours similarly disgruntled, watching parents drag their children from the weed stalks while wondering out loud why the city isn't doing something about it.

A runner who can no longer cut through the park, she sympathizes.

"You don't know what's underneath. You don't know what you're stepping in."

Thornhill resident Harold Milstein is also not impressed.

"We should make the dandelion the official flower of Vaughan," he said.

Mr. Goldstein wonders why the city can enter properties to deal with noxious weeds, yet dandelions in public parks are exempt.

"This is all a perfect example of politicians implementing something without first thinking it through... The cost to repair these parks is now going to be massive as the sod is going to have to be completely replaced."

Thornhiller Gila Martow is miffed that golf courses and farms, which cover much of the land use in Ontario, are exempt from the cosmetic ban, leaving parks to resemble "weed farms with a few blades of grass."

If the city can't use weed inhibitor, re-seed constantly or re-sod every few years, she said, then it should consider AstroTurf.

The city has considered pesticide-free solutions, Ms Fraser said, but they are costly and do not have a long-term impact on future weed growth.

Ms Klapman has another suggestion: cut the grass more often.

"We wouldn't notice the weeds as much if they just mowed it down more. I think they should just hop on those mowers and get mowing."

Vaughan cuts grass on municipal property on a two-week rotation, Ms Fraser said, making it impossible to catch the dandelion flowers before they turn to seed.

Richmond Hill staff mow town grass once a week, road allowances every couple of weeks, and twice a week for sports fields, according to parks supervisor Jim Henderson.

In Richmond Hill, at least, he said, residents appear to be more tolerant, accepting that the dandelion invasion is a three-week phenomenon that will soon pass.

Valerie Burke, a Thornhill-Markham councillor, also sees attitudes changing.

"I agree it doesn't look all that great but it's not a very long time. For the good of our health we're going to have to put up with this period... Obviously we want our community to look nice, but we have to look at the overall picture."

The only thing the town could do is more mowing, but does everyone want us to put more resources into that for this small window of time? And then there's the greenhouse gas effect of mowing."

Thornhill-Vaughan Councillor Alan Shefman said he, too, is hearing fewer complaints. He received one e-mail about the issue this year, the least amount ever, he said.

The pesticide issue hits close to home for Mr. Shefman. Having battled cancer himself, he is especially keen "to get one group of chemicals out of our eco-system and environment. It's a very very small price to pay."

Before the province instituted the ban, he said a local veterinarian reported the number of animals with nose cancer had escalated tremendously and it was attributed to chemicals sprayed on lawns.

While municipalities may not have budgets for safer weed discouragers, such as corn gluten meal, there are more affordable tactics, said Fiona Wood with York Environmental Alliance.

Mowing more often when dandelions are blooming will prevent them from going to seed, she said. Allowing the grass to grow longer in the non-blooming season will shade the weed growth. When public property has bare patches, it should be overseeded right away, and rather than the less-hardy Kentucky bluegrass, she suggests perennial rye or fescue.

And when you find yourself irritated by dandelions, she suggests taking a lesson from children.

"You see them picking them to make chains and bouquets. They don't see them as weeds. They see them as pretty yellow flowers."

GOOD TO KNOW

Ministry of Environment recommends:

Aerate (the mechanical removal of plugs of dirt from the lawn so that air, water and nutrients can reach the roots) in spring and fall.

Overseed by regularly adding grass seed in the early spring and late fall. Mixing the seed with compost or top-dressing with triple mix improves the soil. Add grass seed to bare patches after weeding.

Keeping the lawn between 6 and 8 cm (2 1/2 to 3 inches) high to shade weeds.

Leaving lawn clippings to feed grass naturally after each mow.



Natural weeds could be part of your diet

BY TERESA LATCHFORD
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Your back yard is your salad bowl.

Newmarket's Karen Stephenson admits her friends and family gave her some questionable looks when she began educating them on what can be included in your diet.

"We have been conditioned that weeds need to be destroyed," she said. "The fact is, we have been removing a food source that offers vitamins and minerals."

With the job market still reeling from the recession, more people seeking financial assistance and more clients needing the local food pantry, it doesn't make sense to kill these plants that could make the food system more stable right here at home.

"The word 'weed' seems to have this negative connotation associated with it," she added. "When I find a patch of edible weeds, I cultivate, work around and embrace it."

People need to be open minded because there is an incredible amount of wild edible plants that have been labeled as weeds that have nutritional value.

Ms Stephenson is a writer, but her passion for wild edible food has led her to enrol in a herbal pharmacy education program.

"Before you go out picking these plants, you have to be 100 per cent sure in identification," she stressed, adding some of the edibles have nasty cousins that could make you ill.

There are plenty of reasons to learn more about wild edibles — they are free, genetically stronger than other food, most are drought resistant, most are more nutritious than hybridized store produce and you get exercise by picking your own.

The local resident will head her first group walk about during the annual Spiritfest event at the Sharon Temple National Historic Site Saturday.

Here are the five common wild edibles that can be found locally:

Alfalfa: An overlooked wonder food containing vitamins such as trace elements of B17 said to help prevent cancer, vitamins K, C and E as well as copper and iron. Identified by clusters of 10 to 20 purple flowers and three part leaves scattered along the stem.

The leaves and young shoots can be eaten raw or cooked and can be dried to make teas or soups. The seeds can be ground into powder and mixed into baked goods to improve nutrition.

Broadleaf plantain: This perennial plant packs a punch with vitamin C and all of the Bs, calcium and magnesium. It is identified by its green, oval to egg-shaped leaves that grow in a rosette nature and long-pointed green flowers grow from the base containing seeds.

The entire plant is edible, although the leaves are bitter. Blanching before adding them to a salad softens the leaves. They can be frozen for later use in sautés, soups or stews.

Chickweed: Is a small plant that boasts vitamin A, B and C and calcium, magnesium, iron and selenium. It is a common plant with small, white, star-shaped flowers and oval leaves with pointed tips.

The leaves are best added to a salad or on sandwiches. When adding the plant to a cooked dish, stems and flowers can also be used.

Lambs quarters: The annual wild edible that tastes earthy, similar to chard, is found in sunny areas with poor soil. One handful of the leaves contain more than the required vitamin A daily intake. It can be identified by its dusty look when in a large patch and light green diamond leaves that are pale on the underside. It produces tiny green flowers in clusters.