

Public Participation Meeting
part of Public Safety Committee Meeting
March 6, 2012, 4:00 p.m.

Good afternoon Councillors, Mayor Fontana, Mr. Katolyk and staff. Thank you for the opportunity to speak here today. Good afternoon other attendees.

My name is Maureen Temme. I am an avid and long-time gardener who has over the years commented on a wide variety of environment issues. I do a lot of composting in my gardens. For the record, I'll mention that I am involved actively with Community Gardens London and Transition London Ontario. I am currently on London's Food Charter team, and through that connection have assisted students from Western's Masters of Environment and Sustainability program on a project I'll refer to in this presentation.

I am here today representing myself, not speaking for any group. If some of you do recognize my face, it may be because I appeared at Council back in January, when I was named to the Mayor's Honour List for 2012 in matters to do with Environment.

There are many styles of composters and composting in general gardening books and journals. Books like Mike McGrath's¹ (a particularly readable one) deal exclusively with composting. I am not going to address specifics to do with size of compost piles or what goes into them, because

The Clearing of Land Bylaw (even renamed) *is not* the place for regulations to do with compost, composters and/or composting.

I believe that current text in the Clearing of Land By-law PW-9 - particularly the broad categories of "Domestic Waste" and "Refuse"² - can be used to deal with situations that might arise, so that neighbours and By-law enforcement can resolve perceived problems.

I therefore request you strike the proposed sections 2.10* and 2.11* from any proposed amendments, and change the text³ under the heading Conclusions, on page 2 of the Clearing of Land Bylaw amendments report so that there is no reference to composting.

Compost is valuable, living, organic material which puts nutrient and useful living organisms into soil, aerates soil and increases its ability to hold moisture. Composting is an inherent, important part of gardening.

¹ Mike McGrath's Book of Composting is a particularly readable one. 631.875 MacG.

² The Current Clearing of Land By-law PW-9, Definitions

"Composting" shall mean the biological degradation or breakdown of organic material into a dark, soil-like material called humus

"Composting Container" shall mean the holding unit used to store yard, garden and household waste for the purpose of composting

"Domestic Waste" shall mean any article, thing, matter or effluent belonging to or associated with a residence, household or dwelling unit that appears to be waste material and includes but is not limited to the following classes of waste material:

(a) grass clippings, tree cuttings, brush, leaves and garden refuse:

(c) all kitchen and table waste, of animal or vegetable origin resulting from the preparation or consumption of food except any material of vegetable origin placed in a composting container

"Refuse" means any article, thing, matter, substance or effluent that: has been cast aside, discharged or abandoned or; is discarded from its usual intended use or: is used up, in whole or in part, or expended or worn out in whole or in part; and shall include domestic waste and industrial waste; and that domestic waste and/or industrial waste does not cease to be refuse by reason that it may be commercially saleable or recyclable.

³ Text under heading "Conclusions" page two of

"By implementing by-law regulations that address the containment and location of refuse and compost, various results can be achieved"

Compost, composters and composting are hugely diverse topics and belong in the context of broad-ranging conversations about gardens. I would like to see London welcome gardens of all sorts, all joyous varieties, in many locations and based in the innovative knowledge and varied experiences of gardeners.

I would like there to be conversations about gardens between London gardeners and City staff, that talk about people's health, strong neighbourhoods, and a resilient London.

Several years ago, there was an opportunity to begin such conversations.

At the Environment and Transportation Committee⁴ meeting of July 20, 2009, Agenda Item 22 was a report titled *Boulevard Naturalization Policy Update*. It was submitted by Jay Stanford, Director of Environmental Programs and Solid Waste, with input from Greg Sandle, Pesticide Education Coordinator, Orest Katolyk, Manager of By-law Enforcement, and Andrew Macpherson, Manager, Parks Planning and Design. The agenda for the meeting and the report is found from the London City website's archived meeting pages⁵.

The report referred beyond just gardens planted on boulevard areas to a broad advocacy for varied approaches to public and private gardens and green spaces. The report noted that there are formal and less formal concepts involved with "naturalization" and that garden spaces are important and desired by Londoners and the City.

"Staff recognize that more citizens, neighbourhoods and the City's Parks Operations want to naturalize both public and private spaces to improve neighbourhood pride, improve neighbourhood appeal and for environmental and economic reasons."

The report emphasized that the City's current "tool kit" of by-laws and procedures was more restrictive than welcoming of varied types of planting.

"On private property, the Clearing of Land By-law (PW-9) does allow an individual to seek approval to naturalize their property. However, the approval process is unnecessarily complicated and complex as it requires a separate report to the Environment and Transportation Committee."

"City staff recognize that naturalization has occurred in the past, is occurring now, and there is a desire to encourage "appropriate naturalization" in the future. Therefore, the Naturalization By-law and Procedure Review Team is looking into what by-laws and procedures need to be reviewed and possibly amended (Table 1) to allow naturalization with appropriate criteria."

That report also noted that as many more people vary their garden styles and want what is called an "exemption to the clearing of land bylaw" much staff time could be taken up.

"The current approach for naturalization on private property is cumbersome, generally as a result of a complaint, with each request requiring review by a qualified landscape architect and a report to the ETC. For example, if one percent of London households chose to naturalize their landscape, over 1,000 reports to ETC would be required under the Current By-law."

In researching for this presentation I did not find on the City website the flyer/guideline to getting an "Amendment to the Clearing of Land Bylaw." This procedure, though cumbersome and the one recommended to be replaced, was at least a procedure. I do know that City staff currently work case-by-case when there are complaints, do mediation between neighbours and are open to varied gardens styles. I respect and commend them for this.

Several days prior to that July 20/09 meeting I wrote to Mr. Stanford⁶ about the Update, saying I was "happy to see that the City is beginning the process of revising the bylaws that govern boulevard gardens and naturalization of areas on one's property." Mostly my wish was that any report London undertook to do with gardens and gardening started "with the positives about gardens and gives gardeners respect for their desire to craft beauty, healthy environment, and pride in one's home and neighbourhood." I copied this letter to the members of the Environment

⁴ Environment and Transportation Committee members as of July 2009: Councillors P. Hubert (chair), G. Hume, R. Caranci, C. Miller and J. Bryant; Controller G. Barber, Mayor De Cicco-Best (ex-officio), H. Lysinski secretary.

⁵ London website, archived meeting agenda and report for ETC meeting July 20, 2009
<http://www.london.ca/d.aspx?s=/meetings/Archives/Agendas/Environment%20and%20Transportation%20Committee%20Agendas/ETC%20Agendas%202009/2009-07-20%20Agenda/Archives.htm>

⁶ Letter available if anyone wants to read it.

and Transportation Committee and to Cory Morningstar, then (as now) chair of the Advisory Committee on the Environment.

It won't surprise you when I say I was very disappointed when the report of that ETC meeting stated that The *Boulevard Naturalization Policy Update* was "reviewed and received"⁷. Nothing has been heard of the report since, although I understand City staff from several department would like to go forward on various matters to do with gardens.

Further to the idea of going forward ...

Four students from the Masters of Environment and Sustainability program at Western are looking at policies and bylaws to do with community gardens in particular, and with urban agriculture secondarily (due to time constraints). They are looking at what London has and does not have, and at policies in other places. They will make some recommendations. This work will be an asset to conversations that London City staff and citizens can have, and to development of gardens in London over the next few years.

This past Friday, March 2, I met with the the students and with Trevor Fowler (Food Charter team facilitator and program manager with the Ending Poverty Implementation Team). The students have had interesting and useful interviews with several city staff. Making reference to bylaws, one senior City staff person said to them that it can be better to *not* have something actually written into a bylaw, because the absence of a restriction can give a department leeway to interpret how something is handled and lead to a solution or resolution that is good for all sides.

Anything put into a by-law is by nature a restriction, a narrowing. Adding non-contextual items about composters to the Clearing of Land By-law could end up being a headache to undo.

Today, I respectfully request that the Public Safety Committee strike any and all sections to do with compost, composters and composting from the proposed amendments to the Clearing of Land By-law PW-9

Further, I encourage you and City Staff to start the conversations between City Hall and community members in regards to the welcoming of all sorts of gardens in London. I volunteer to be one of the community members in these get togethers and will even read City paperwork. I am also willing and able to help City staff connect with individuals and organizations who might be interested in participating in such discussions.

Thank you for your time.

Maureen Temme
66 Palmer Street
London, Ontario
N6H 1P7

⁷ Report of the ETC meeting of July 20, 2009 is on the City website, under the archived meeting agendas and reports (see page 11 of the report):

<http://www.london.ca/d.aspx?s=/Meetings/Archives/Reports%20and%20Minutes/Environment%20and%20Transportation%20Committee%20Reports/ETC%20Reports%202009/2009-07-20%20Report/Archives.htm>

"That the Environment and Transportation Committee Reviewed and Received an information report from the Director of Environmental Programs and Solid Waste with respect to an update on boulevard naturalization policy development (2009-D04-00)