

Laura Rupprecht

Subject: FW: Zoning By-law Amendment Application (Section 34 of Planning Act R.S.O., 1990, King Street Parkette, Twp of Uxbridge)

From: Ted Barris [REDACTED]
Sent: November 28, 2024 5:43 PM
To: Debbie Leroux <dleroux@uxbridge.ca>
Subject: Re: Zoning By-law Amendment Application (Section 34 of Planning Act R.S.O., 1990, King Street Parkette, Twp of Uxbridge)

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Ms. Leroux...

I wish to submit this written response to the proposed by-law amendment regarding the King Street Parkette:

This is a document file of the "Barris Beat" column I wrote in the *Uxbridge Cosmos* (it was published on June 27, 2024).

I wish to have it included in submissions OPPOSING the proposed by-law amendment:

"Can't see the forest for the pleas"

In mid-June, my neighbour Gerry Oldham stopped by. She was on her way home from attending Township Council. She looked glum. When I asked her what was wrong, she got even more upset.

"Our park's been declared surplus," she said, her voice emotional.

When I asked for an explanation, she told me that she'd received an email from our councillor on June 7, which was a Friday. It informed her that at the next council meeting – Monday, June 10 – the future of the King Street parkette would be determined. She explained that she'd called the township office that very day, Friday, seeking an opportunity to speak to the resolution to close and/or sell off the park. Ms. Oldham attended the Monday meeting, waited for the issue on the agenda, and an opportunity to speak.

As she explained in her letter to the editor (June 20), Mayor Dave Barton told her in council, "This is no time for questions."

Ms. Oldham responded that she had no questions, but had testimony to illustrate how valuable the parkette has proven to be in this neighbourhood for over 40 years. When she'd finished – without a single question from Mayor Barton or any councillors – the resolution to close the park was read, voted on and passed.

"No councillor queried the report. No one questioned why the report said (the park) was underutilized. No one asked why no updated equipment had ever been provided to the park," Ms. Oldham said.

Full disclosure: I've lived half a block from the King Street parkette since 1988, just after the park was created. Our two daughters and all six grandchildren have grown up playing part-time in that parkette. And all four canine members of our family (since 1988) have chased frisbees in that park, rolled in its grass, chased rabbits (and caught none). And I've always left that space as clean (or cleaner) than the way I found it. I hasten to add, Council has not added a stitch of equipment, except a summertime garbage can, in all the years we've enjoyed its green space.

Coincidentally, last week, members of Uxbridge Township Council, along with some MPPs, and a group of chosen residents, participated in the unveiling of a new provincial park just outside town. When my colleague

Roger Varley sought to cover the unveiling of Uxbridge Urban Park, he said, “I found the entrance to the road (into the park) blocked by a public works vehicle.”

Eventually, Varley was admitted. Amid much fanfare (Finance Minister Bethlenfalvy called the occasion “momentous”), reporter Varley noted that the provincial government will commit \$19 million over three years to develop the park. In his published editorial, Varley questioned the expense to taxpayers – closing the road, transporting dignitaries there, setting up equipment, signage, etc. – to stage such an elaborate event.

“(It’s) an enormous opportunity for economic activity in Uxbridge,” Varley quoted Mayor Barton as saying. Interesting notion, that of economic opportunity associated with a public park. I recognize that green space brings with it the prospect of trail hiking, cycling, camping and a host of other tourist activities, with potential spinoff for the local economy. But I found the two public pronouncements by this council sadly contradictory. On one hand, the mayor and council seem profoundly eager to cultivate green space, Uxbridge Urban Park, as a cash-generating attraction. On the other, they cannot recognize the value of in-town green space, the King Street parkette, as respite for residents both young and old.

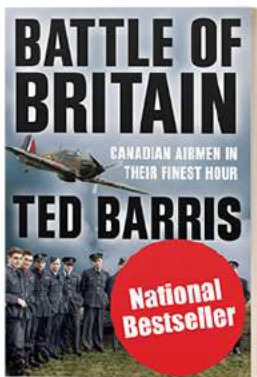
Indeed, after it voted to dispatch the parkette, last week, Ms. Oldham told me, Council promptly invited those residents whose properties adjoin the park to jointly or individually purchase the parkette from the township. The King Street parkette doesn’t need a \$19 million budget to serve hundreds of people (we’ve staged block picnics there for years). Meanwhile, the parkette hasn’t seen so much as a park bench, a modest swing set, a picnic table or a sandbox added in the 36 years we’ve visited it.

My fear – like the Ford government’s lust to parachute an upscale spa into the public playground that was once Ontario Place, and its clandestine (now exposed) favoritism to land developers to exploit the GTA Greenbelt – is that our own Township Council sees local green space as dispensable in lieu of mega projects designed to generate revenue and not necessarily improve the well-being of residents.

When it comes time to vote municipally, I’ll remember my neighbour Gerry Oldham’s voice telling me they’d chosen to dispatch the King Street parkette and ignore her plea. “Just as our park has been neglected, I also felt neglected,” she said.

Please notify me that this submission has been received and included in the correspondence for township councillors to read as they debate the issue.

Ted Barris.



Ted Barris



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