

Langley City jumps on 'ban' wagon

Most Lower Mainland communities have bans

BY HEATHER COLPITTS, LANGLEY ADVANCE MAY 17, 2012 2:03 AM

Langley City is going to try to landscape naturally.

On Monday council passed a cosmetic pesticide ban that applies to residential and City lands.

Currently the City does not use pesticides in parks but does to control weeds on places such as playing fields, streets, lanes, and medians.

The proposed bylaw called for a ban on residential lands but Councillor Ted Schaffer pitched the idea of including City lands.

"I'd like us to see us be the stewards of our City," he said.

Coun. Gayle Martin and Teri James who noted that the inclusion of City lands comes with an estimated \$60,000 price tag.

"I think I'd like to have a better [idea] of what this is going to cost," Martin said.

The figure was based on staff estimates of needing two staff and equipment working for five months of the year to do manual landscaping.

Coun. Dave Hall said staff time could be reallocated to reduce costs and the City could work closer with the Langley Environmental Partners Society (LEPS).

"To put a price on public health is a pretty tough thing to do," Hall said.

Twelve-year-old friends Taya Velikajne, Isabelle Manning, and Sheridan Trowell spoke to council during the committee of the whole, where the public had a chance to comment on the proposed ban. While Isabelle and Sheridan called for the ban on behalf of all local kids, for Taya, it was more personal.

Her family makes her stay indoors at times of the year when spraying is common because she's had severe reactions when playing outside and has tested negative to pollen and other natural allergens.

The H.D. Stafford Middle School students aren't new to green efforts. They used to help with the Blacklock Fine Arts Elementary community garden and the school's program to garden with the Langley Seniors Resource Centre.

"I'm so happy," said Taya after the vote.

Schaffer told the three friends after the meeting that they have influenced a decision made by government.

During the public input, Rhys Griffiths of the Langley Field Naturalists spoke in favour of the ban and was impressed that the elected officials added municipal lands.

"That was a significant win this evening for us," Griffiths commented.

He said the Parks and Environment Committee members have repeatedly suggested the ban so it was a surprise that it passed with so little fanfare.

Christina Beck, with the Canadian Cancer Society, had spoken before council twice, advocating for the ban.

"It's just so nice to see that they are valuing health," Beck said. "It makes the bylaw so much stronger to be comprehensive."

The ban will not apply to products needed for human health (such as pest control related to disease transmission), ones that impact agriculture or forestry, and products needed for lands related to transportation, public utilities, or pipelines.

The bylaw is available through the Langley City website (www.city.langley.bc.ca) or at City hall. Most neighbouring municipalities have pesticide bans. The bylaw will rely on provincial government lists of pesticides/toxins and the provincial list of noxious and invasive plants and animals classed as non-native.

There are 40 B.C. communities that have these bans, with 38 of them including residential and municipal lands.

hcolpitts@langleyadvance.com

© Copyright (c) Langley Advance