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Vernon Morning Star

Pesticide bylaw drives debate

By [Richard Rolke - Vernon Morning Star](#)

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Plans to restrict chemical applications on nuisance weeds are having a difficult time taking root.

Vernon council refused to endorse a cosmetic pesticide control bylaw Monday, and instead sent it back to staff so more information can be compiled.

“When I have to tell my neighbour he can’t spray on his own property, I have a problem with that,” said Coun. Jack Gilroy.

“There are people taking care of their yards and they’re immaculate and I can’t see telling them they will have to have dandelions.”

Under the draft bylaw, pesticides would be reduced for public lands either owned by the city or contracted by the city to maintain within Vernon.

It also calls for the residential component of the bylaw to be enacted in 2012.

“How can we enforce it on private land?” said Mayor Wayne Lippert.

Staff indicated there’s no proof that broad-leaved weeds have created safety risks on sports fields, but Coun. Shawn Lee disagreed.

“I’ve seen a soccer career end on a plantain (weed) at Marshall Field,” he said.

There were also concerns that switching from chemicals to integrated pest management could be expensive. As an example, weed

control at Lakeview Park now costs about \$50 a year, but that could soar to \$9,000.

“It’s a big amount,” Lippert said of the price tag that could face taxpayers with parks.

However, the bylaw also has its supporters.

“If you are taking care of your lawn with watering, aeration and fertilizing, you can dramatically reduce your weed issue,” said Coun. Buffy Baumbrough, who questions the need for chemicals to control cosmetic weeds.

While he has concerns about the potential costs, Coun. Patrick Nicol believes the bylaw is a positive move.

“A lot of people wanted this for the health reasons and a number of jurisdictions have gone this route,” he said.

In her report to council, environmental planner Brooke Marshall stated the draft bylaw is based on regulations in other jurisdictions.

“Twenty-two communities in B.C. have cosmetic pesticide bylaws,” she said.

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