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City to draft cosmetic pesticide bylaw

Pesticide ban goes to draft bylaw stage without committee recommendation

By Carolyn Grant

There is a process usually followed in municipal politics when it comes to a new bylaw. Most times, when a group or person has suggested a bylaw - if Council accepts the request - all the information is sent to committee for a closer look. The committee may have those for and against the bylaw present to them again. Then a committee recommendation comes back to Council with a suggestion to either draft a bylaw, or proceed no further.

At Kimberley City Council this week, Coun. Paddy Weston decided not to wait any longer for a committee recommendation on a cosmetic pesticide ban and proposed that a bylaw be drafted. And her motion passed three votes to two, with both Mayor Jim Ogilvie and Coun. Bob McWhinnie away.

The Operations Committee has had the information on cosmetic pesticides for some time. Wildsight and a coalition of concerned citizens first approached Council with the idea of a ban on cosmetic pesticides over a year ago. Patti Moore from the Canadian Cancer Society has visited Council on a number of occasions to press the issue as well. On Monday evening, Moore visited again, this time with Kimberley physician Stafanie Falz, to present the growing body of evidence they say links pesticide use to some cancers, particularly Non-Hodgkins Lymphoma.

Dr. Falz pointed out the similarities between the growing evidence about pesticides and the way tobacco use has changed from a single study in 1938 to widespread bans on tobacco use today.

What the group wants is a bylaw that will ban the use of cosmetic pesticides - that being pesticides used purely for the beautification of lawns and gardens. Most bylaws already in place (there are 18 in BC including a new one in Invermere) do not ban their use on golf courses.

Moore says evidence shows that the bylaws work. For instance Halifax, has reduced pesticide use by 51 per cent in the first year of the bylaw.

Coun. Albert Hogle, who chaired the meeting in Ogilvie's absence, said he would sure like to see some action from the provincial or federal governments. "It would be nice if Health Canada would put a ban on these pesticides, then small municipalities wouldn't have to worry," he said. "We've looked at it in the past. The recommendation hasn't come back from Operations year. At the last operations meeting, people who use pesticides presented to the committee. They had differing views on the ban.

Hogle was also concerned that there was a perception out there that Kimberley was throwing pesticides all over the place. Not the case, he said.

Weston said that as Chair of the Health and Protection Committee she felt that it was time to direct staff to prepare a draft bylaw. "It's clear there is concern in the

community," Weston said. "There are plenty of healthy alternative treatments available. A block away from here on Howard Street is one of Kimberley's most beautiful gardens and it is pesticide free.

The bylaw can be designed with a phase in period that will give people ample time to adjust. Kimberley City Council must demonstrate leadership. As they saying goes, it's better to be safe than sorry."

Coun. Brent Bush, who seconded the motion wondered if there was a time frame for any type of provincial legislation.

Moore said that while some provinces such as Ontario and Quebec had such legislation, it usually came from a groundswell of community action.

Bush said that a bylaw seemed like a reasonable approach. He said such a bylaw would be a progressive move a community that wants to attract new young families.

"I urge all Council to support this motion," he said.

Coun. Keiran Hickey said he would support it. "I'm not a proponent of cosmetic pesticides," he said. "But it's pretty important for the economy that golf courses are exempt."

"I don't believe Kimberley uses an over abundant amount of pesticides," Hogleund said. "We do spray our fields but we use the smallest amounts possible that will give the greatest effect and we use licensed applicators. I don't want a feeling out there that Kimberley is widely using pesticides."

However, Hogleund said he would be voting against the bylaw, not because he was against the pesticide ban but because he felt they were jumping the gun. "I think it should go back to committee for another look. Then it should be brought back to Council," he said. "It should be sent back to committee for recommendations."

Coun. Bob West-Sells agreed with Hogleund.

"It's a very significant step to take and we should do it right," he said. "I kind of resent the fact that we won't get to discuss it more fully. How are we going to implement it etc. It needs more committee work."

Weston replied that is was discussed at committee quite thoroughly.

"I felt it had to be brought to Council as a whole so we could move forward. WE have a sample of Invermere's bylaw. We don't need to follow it precisely and there are plenty of other municipalities we can draw upon as well."

Weston, Bush and Hickey voted to have a bylaw drafted. Hogleund and West-Sells voted no.

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