



City of Kingston
Report to Environment, Infrastructure & Transportation Policies Committee
Report Number EITP-24-016

To: Chair and Members of the Environment, Infrastructure & Transportation Policies Committee

From: Brad Joyce, Commissioner, Infrastructure, Transportation & Emergency Services

Resource Staff: Karen Santucci, Director, Public Works & Solid Waste

Date of Meeting: April 9, 2024

Subject: No Mow May

Council Strategic Plan Alignment:

Theme: 2. Lead Environmental Stewardship and Climate Action

Goal: 4.1 Enhance community safety and well-being.

Executive Summary:

The initiative No Mow May has benefits in that it provides food and shelter for pollinators in the early spring when their food and shelter sources are scarce. In 2023, Council made a motion to encourage residents to not mow lawns during the month of May 2023. They also recommended that staff look for municipally owned lands that could be left natural for the month of May for 2024.

Upon review of areas which the City currently mows and a review of concerns raised by citizens in previous years, it was determined that the following areas could be left naturalized for the month of May:

- Areas around storm ponds
- Right of ways around rural roads, unless line of sight is impacted
- Identified strips along outside of 6 specified parks
- Designated naturalized areas within parks

April 9, 2024

Page 2 of 7

Recommendation:

That the Environment, Infrastructure & Transportation Policies Committee recommend to Council:

That the City of Kingston encourage interested residents to increase pollinator-friendly habitats by promoting pollinator-friendly lawncare practices on residential properties from May 1, 2024 to May 31, 2024; and

That Council direct staff to not mow the areas identified in Exhibit A of Report Number EITP-24-016 before June 1, 2024, unless the un-mowed area creates a safety issue associated with roadside line of sight.

April 9, 2024

Page 3 of 7

Authorizing Signatures:

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY COMMISSIONER

**Brad Joyce, Commissioner,
Infrastructure, Transportation &
Emergency Services**

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

**Lanie Hurdle, Chief
Administrative Officer**

Consultation with the following Members of the Corporate Management Team:

Paige Agnew, Commissioner, Growth & Development Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Jennifer Campbell, Commissioner, Community Services	Not required
Neil Carbone, Commissioner, Corporate Services	Not required
David Fell, President & CEO, Utilities Kingston	Not required
Peter Huigenbos, Commissioner, Major Projects & Strategic Initiatives	Not required
Desirée Kennedy, Chief Financial Officer & City Treasurer	Not required

April 9, 2024

Page 4 of 7

Options/Discussion:

On December 22, 2022, Council approved a new motion which directed staff to amend the Property Standards By-Law to specifically allow the implementation of pollinator gardens on private properties, and to develop and roll out a public education campaign prior to Spring 2023.

Background

The “No Mow May” campaign encourages homeowners not to mow their lawns for the month of May. This movement was started in the United Kingdom to support insect pollinator populations. The theory is that pollinators need sources of food in the spring and lawns could provide this food through flowering weeds, thereby increasing the abundance of pollinators.

On February 6, 2023, Council approved the following motion:

Therefore Be It Resolved That the City of Kingston encourage interested residents to increase pollinator-friendly habitats by promoting pollinator-friendly lawncare practices on their own properties from May 1, 2023 to May 31, 2023; and

That Council direct staff not to enforce Section 4.42.3 of By-Law Number 2005-100, A By-Law for Prescribing Standards for the Maintenance and Occupancy of Property Within the City of Kingston, as amended, from May 1, 2023 to May 31, 2023 and the month of May during this Council term; and

That the City of Kingston use social media and other platforms to be one of the leaders to actively promote and educate the community about “No Mow May” and its benefits for generating crucial pollinator-supporting habitats; and

That Council recognize and express its appreciation to the Kingston Frontenac Rotary Club for its support during this initiative; and

That staff be directed to report back to the Environment, Infrastructure, and Transportation Policies Committee by the end of Q1 in 2024 as to which municipally owned lands the city could leave un-mowed during the month of May 2024.

Staff have reviewed areas where No Mow May would be feasible on public lands. This review included looking at concerns raised by residents regarding grass maintenance, ensuring safety, ensuring the usability of public lands for their intended usages, while understanding the need to provide additional support to our pollinators, birds, and insects.

April 9, 2024

Page 5 of 7

Analysis

On average, the City receives 250 calls a season for additional grass maintenance in parks and along roadways. These calls are generally related to:

- unsightly conditions
- concerns about ticks in longer grass
- concerns about invasive species and noxious weeds

The City completes mowing in three main areas: roadside mowing; mowing in parks; and sports field maintenance. Of the three types of mowing, staff only looked to determine areas that could be left naturalized for the month of May as it related to roadside mowing and mowing in parks.

Roadside mowing is conducted to ensure that clear lines of sight are available for drivers of vehicles. Generally, staff clear the entire right-of-way along the sides of arterial and rural roads. Rural roads are generally cut three times per year. Typically, rural rights of way are cut starting in mid-May. For the most part, staff can defer this first cut in rural areas until June. This is dependent on there not being substantial early vegetation growth which results in a blockage of the sight lines. In the case that sight lines are blocked in rural areas, staff would cut a six to ten foot swath along the side of the road and would leave the remaining right-of-way uncut. Arterial roads are cut weekly; these areas are generally narrower and would not be able to be left natural as they could impact sight lines and they are more actively used by residents in a busy urban area.

Park mowing is done for more than just maintaining the appearance of the parks. Each park has designated green play space, walkways, and green areas around play structures and other park features. Staff receive many concerns in parks regarding ticks when the grass is left long as it affects both residents and pets. In most parks, staff would look to continue to mow the majority of the park. Leaving large areas of parks uncut would not only increase complaints from residents but also have a major impact on the ability to catch up to the maintenance in the month of June. (If the grass is allowed to grow too long, multiple cuttings are required.) Mowing routes are currently planned such that each mower is scheduled daily in order to meet the cutting requirements of the City's 200 parks. That said, staff could look to leave a small swath around the outside of defined parks naturalized for the month of May. This could be completed in the following parks:

- Dunham Park
- Garden Walk Park
- Meadowbrook Park
- Oak Street Park
- Rodden Park
- Woodland Park

April 9, 2024

Page 6 of 7

Staff will also look to the areas surrounding all City-managed stormwater ponds to leave naturalized for the month of May. Currently, there are 48 City-managed stormwater ponds in Kingston.

Staff will not make any changes to current maintenance practices for sports fields which are maintained for the specific purpose of recreational and organized play. There are specified standards on the care and maintenance of these fields to provide high-quality fields and diamonds for the associated user groups.

In 2013, Council approved a Sustainable Turf Care Management Plan including the adoption of five turf naturalization areas within City parks. These areas were seeded with a blended meadow grass mixture. Since that time, these areas have been left to grow throughout the season with mowing occurring on a seasonal basis only. The following naturalization areas will continue to be uncut in the following parks since 2013:

1. Cloverdale Park
2. Edenwood Park
3. Lawrence Park
4. Meadowbrook Park
5. Snider Park

Climate Risk Considerations

Pollinators play an essential role in supporting resilient communities by helping maintain plant populations and promoting climate change adaptation. No Mow May offers significant benefits to pollinators like bees and butterflies, and ground-foraging birds that need assistance in the spring when food and habitat are scarce. No Mow May supports the ongoing survival of pollinators especially in urban areas.

Existing Policy/By-Law

By-Law Number 2005-100, A By-Law for Prescribing Standards for the Maintenance and Occupancy of Property Within the City of Kingston, as amended.

Notice Provisions

Staff will sign areas within parks that are being left natural for No Mow May. Due to the significant volume of signs that would be required and the lower impact on residents, roadside mowing areas will not be posted with No Mow May signs.

Financial Considerations

There are no financial considerations outside of the existing 2024 operating budgets.

April 9, 2024

Page 7 of 7

Contacts:

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Other City of Kingston Staff Consulted:

Troy Stubinski, Operations Manager, Public Works

Adam McDonald, Operation Manager, Public Works

Kyle Compeau, Manager Enforcement, Licensing & Enforcement

Julie Salter-Keane, Manager, Climate Leadership, Climate Leadership Division

Exhibits Attached:

Exhibit A – Map of public properties to be left naturalized for No Mow May

