

Application to Remove a Private Tree – 6 Follis Avenue

Date: March 17, 2023

To: Toronto and East York Community Council

From: Director, Urban Forestry, Parks, Forestry and Recreation

Wards: University-Rosedale - 11

SUMMARY

This report requests that Toronto and East York Community Council deny the request for a permit to remove one privately owned tree located at 6 Follis Avenue. The applicant indicates the reason for requesting removal is due to the location of the tree, limited root space, disease, dripping sap, and needle drop.

The Austrian pine tree, *Pinus nigra*, in question measures 32 cm in diameter. The City's Tree By-laws do not support the removal of this tree as it is healthy and maintainable. Community Council has delegated authority from City Council to make a final decision as to whether a permit may be issued when an applicant wishes to appeal the City's decision to deny a tree permit.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Director of Urban Forestry, Parks, Forestry and Recreation recommends that:

1. Toronto and East York Community Council deny the request for a permit to remove one privately owned tree located at 6 Follis Avenue.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no financial implications resulting from the adoption of this report.

DECISION HISTORY

There is no decision history related to this tree removal permit application.

COMMENTS

Parks, Forestry and Recreation received an application for a permit to remove one privately owned tree located in the rear yard at 6 Follis Avenue. The Austrian pine tree in question measures 32 cm in diameter. The applicant indicates the reason for requesting removal is due to the location of the tree, limited root space, disease, dripping sap, and needle drop.

The arborist report that accompanied the application noted that the tree has diplodia tip blight, a common disease affecting Austrian pines, which is apparent in the lower foliage. The tree is located next to a fence and overtop of the parking spaces, which creates a concern that the sap and needle drop that comes along with the disease may cause the tree to damage the property.

City staff inspected the tree and at the time of inspection determined that it is healthy and maintainable. Diplodia tip blight is a fungal disease not known to be terminal and would not cause the tree to be considered in poor condition. Minor signs of browning needles was observed on site however this is part of the life cycle of many coniferous trees with or without diplodia tip blight present. The existence of diplodia tip blight could not be confirmed at the time and lab testing would be the only mechanism to confirm its presence.

This tree is situated adjacent to a fence, but far enough that routine maintenance of the tree and fence can be performed. The tree being located in a planter box does not seem to have affected its growth, and would not cause the tree to be considered in poor condition. The concern about root space limitations does not seem to be affecting the health of the tree.

Every large growing tree requires some degree of maintenance such as removal of leaves, flowers, fruit, twigs and small branches. Removal of debris such as falling needles and dripping sap is considered part of regular property maintenance and is a responsibility of all property owners within the City of Toronto.

The City's Tree By-laws do not support tree removal to address the perceived nuisance resulting from a tree's natural functions. Through the inspection and review of the arborist report, a permit to remove the tree was denied by Parks, Forestry and Recreation. Community Council has delegated authority from City Council to make a final decision as to whether a permit may be issued when an applicant wishes to appeal the City's decision to deny a tree permit.

As required under *Section 813-19, of City of Toronto Municipal Code, Chapter 813, Trees, Article III*, a notice of application sign was posted on the subject property for the minimum 14-day period in order to provide an opportunity for comment by the community. One comment was received in opposition to the application to remove the tree in question.

Protecting the urban forest is critical in building climate resilience as urban centres continue to face increasing development, impacts due to climate change in the form of extreme weather events, and other natural threats such as invasive pests. The City has reaffirmed its canopy target of 40 per cent by 2050. One approach to support achieving this target is to protect healthy trees from injury and removal whenever possible. A sustainable and expanding urban forest also supports the City of Toronto's goals to improve quality of life and well-being of its residents.

Toronto's urban forest provides \$55 million in ecosystem services and benefits annually. Services such as air pollution removal, reduction of storm water runoff, and carbon sequestration all contribute to climate resilience. Protecting and expanding tree cover helps to mitigate exposure to extreme heat events through shade and transpiration. A higher density of trees in a neighbourhood has been shown to significantly improve physical and mental well-being by reducing blood pressure, decreasing stress levels and by promoting physical activity. Economic benefits include enhancements to property values, increased tourism and consumer spending.

In keeping with the City's Strategic Forest Management Plan, Toronto's Official Plan, Toronto's Biodiversity Strategy, and the Tree Protection By-laws, the Austrian pine tree at 6 Follis Avenue is a valuable part of the urban forest, providing numerous aesthetic, social and economic benefits to the property owner and the local community and therefore should not be removed.

Parks, Forestry and Recreation recommends Toronto and East York Community Council deny the request for a permit to remove a privately owned tree located at 6 Follis Avenue. Should Toronto and East York Community Council grant this request for tree removal, the following recommendation may be adopted, in accordance with the City's Tree By-law permit requirements:

- 1) Toronto and East York Community Council approve the request for a permit to remove one privately owned tree located at 6 Follis Avenue, and require the applicant to provide five replacement trees which can be achieved in a combination of on-site planting and cash-in-lieu of planting to the satisfaction of the General Manager of Parks, Forestry and Recreation.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

Kim Statham
Director, Urban Forestry
Parks, Forestry and Recreation

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Figure 1: Staff photograph of the Austrian pine tree at 6 Follis Avenue; September 20, 2022.

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