

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CLERKS & PLANNING SERVICES

OBJECTIVE

To present the committee with the results of the public input regarding to a request to close a laneway on Paris Drive.

RECOMMENDATION

That the request for the closure of the laneway between 13 and 11A Paris Drive be forwarded to Council for consideration

BACKGROUND

At the November 6th Bylaw and Planning Standing Committee meeting, staff presented a request from the owners of 13 and 11A Paris Drive to close the laneway adjacent to their properties. Staff were directed to seek input from City Departments and the public, in accordance with the Laneway Closure Policy. A notice was posted for 3 weeks as part of this process.

ANALYSIS

Feedback from City departments was minimal. Public Works advised that that this particular laneway has never been part of the City's regular maintenance schedule. Additionally, it does not contain any easements for infrastructure.

Staff also consulted with City Planners as laneways and walkways are noted in the City's Official Plan which states:

Policy Statement: The laneways and walkways within the Municipality shall generally be retained in accordance with our Official Plan policy statements with respect to maintaining pedestrian linkages and keeping walking distance to bus stops in the urban area within 300 to 400 metres from residences.

In some instances where special circumstances demonstrate that a proven history of problems with a walkway exists, application may be made by adjacent property owners to have the laneway closed.

There were no objections from the Planners regarding the proposed closure as the laneway is not maintained, is not a connecting laneway to an adjoining street, and there is at least one other alternate access point to the trail systems on Paris Drive.

We received 6 public comments, all of which favored keeping the laneway open, suggesting that maintenance and enforcement issues be addressed rather than pursuing closure. While this is a relatively low response, it is anticipated that there will be a greater public reaction once a decision is made.

The key themes were as follows:

- **Community Use:** The laneway is considered a valuable and time-saving route, especially for students and long-time residents.
- **Maintenance:** Many suggest improving the upkeep of the laneway instead of closing it.
- **Safety:** The laneway is perceived as safer than alternate routes, which are claimed to be less maintained and pose higher risks.
- **Fiscal Concerns:** Some expressed opposition to using city funds for closure as well as concerns about setting a precedent for other closures.
- **Alternative Solutions:** Suggestions included improved snow removal enforcement and fencing to address homeowner concerns.
- **Broader Implications:** There is concern that closure could set a precedent for removing other walkways, potentially undermining the city's accessibility and character.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Should the committee recommend the closure to Council, the costs for the closure would be borne by the benefiting property owners. These costs include obtaining a plan of survey, an appraisal or Opinion of Value, and preparing the necessary transfer documents. The applicants are aware of these costs and have agreed to cover them. The applicant has also paid the required application fee to initiate the process.

LINKS TO STRATEGIC PLAN

This process aligns with the Strategic Plan through:

Governance Item 9. -The City will focus its communication strategy to ensure that citizens are informed and able to provide feedback on Municipal activities. This strategy will consider multiple channels of communication between Elliot Lake and all residents.

Following the established policy and responding to requests from the public in a consistent manner represents value in our municipal services.

SUMMARY

Given the low response to the public consultation on the proposed laneway closure, staff recommend that the committee forward the request for closure to Council for consideration.

