

HIGHLIGHTS

Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury Town Hall Q&A – April 9, 2020

Question: The current fire ban was enacted because of the pandemic. What are the conditions that have to be met in order to lift the fire ban?

Answer: The open air burn ban has been temporarily put into place to protect emergency response capabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic. The burn ban allows fire staff to focus on essential services by minimizing the extra calls associated with open air burning.

We are coming into grass fire season, with lots of dead vegetation from last year available as fuel, and this is a serious risk when combined with outdoor burning. We evaluate weather conditions and current land conditions when deciding whether to implement or lift burn bans.

We will continually evaluate the impact of COVID-19 on our resources and the information coming to us from the province to determine if the ban needs to remain in place.

Question: During a burn ban, can propane and natural gas barbecues, fire bowls or outdoor fireplaces be used? What about charcoal grills and smokers?

Answer: The Bradford West Gwillimbury “Open Air Burning By-law 2012-026” has several exemptions, including:

Section 3.1(b): Commercially produced gas fire appliances conforming to the applicable Canadian Standards Association (CSA) codes and standards.

Under this exemption, propane or natural gas barbecues and outdoor fireplaces/fire bowls may be used during an open air burning ban. They are a listed appliance and should be used in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions including ensuring proper clearance from combustibles.

Section 3.1(d): If the burning consists of a small confined fire supervised at all times and used to cook food on a barbeque.

Under this exemption, charcoal grills and smokers may be used during an open air burning ban ONLY to cook food (not for heat/entertainment). As soon as the food is removed from the grill, the charcoals need to be extinguished, as briquettes have been known to pop and throw pieces into nearby combustibles, resulting in fires. They should be used in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions including ensuring proper clearance from combustibles.

Question: What are your thoughts on community cloth mask initiatives? The goal is to have volunteers make cloth masks for ALL community members to wear when outside their homes (e.g. grocery shopping) so that asymptomatic carriers reduce the risk of infecting others. Is there potential to use Town Library or Leisure infrastructure and staffing to coordinate these efforts remotely?

Answer: If members of the community wish to make cloth masks and make them available to the public, we certainly applaud your initiative. Unfortunately, our facilities are currently closed and no staff are working on site so we can't offer these locations to help distribute masks, but if any group has a request for another way that we can help they are welcome to contact us.

Question: Will the Town and County allow us to continue using the walking and cycling trails in the area or will these be closed as well?

Answer: At this time only playgrounds and other outdoor recreational amenities are closed. Grassy parkland, trails and bike paths remain open and people are encouraged to take a walk and get fresh air. This could change if the advice from the Province or the Health Unit to municipalities indicates that closure of trails is required, or if there are issues with inadequate social distancing or other unsafe behaviour in these areas. For now, we are monitoring our parks and responding to all calls from the public to investigate any issues.

Question: Why are we not allowed to walk in Scanlon Creek as long as we don't touch anything (i.e. doors on buildings, picnic tables or use the public restroom facilities)? Especially for people who suffer from anxiety and depression, sometimes a walk in nature is more calming than on town streets and sidewalks.

Answer: Scanlon Creek Conservation Area is the property of the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority. The LSRCA announced that they would be closing all Conservation Areas because as a non-essential service, their staff are not able to conduct their usual trail maintenance, including monitoring for hazards like falling or fallen trees. Since they cannot ensure visitor safety, the Conservation Areas have been closed until further notice.

Town parks and trails and Simcoe County Forest tracts are still available for your use as long as you practice safe physical distancing.

Question: Will Carrot Fest be cancelled and will the vendors who may have paid already get a refund?

Answer: The Town has been giving a great deal of consideration to upcoming events, but it is looking less and less like these summer events will be able to go ahead.

A report on this subject is to come before council at their next meeting on April 21. Once a decision is made about Carrot Fest, all vendors will be notified. If the event is cancelled, any vendor that has already paid for their spot will get a refund.

If we are unable to hold our usual Canada Day gathering, we will look for other opportunities to celebrate and connect virtually.

Question: How often are municipal officers policing parks and common areas and fining people?

Answer: All 26 municipal parks are now being patrolled by an officer twice a day – more often if they are identified as a problem area. Last week, municipal Enforcement Officers conducted 111 park patrols and issued 3 warnings. Parks staff are also performing morning and evening patrols and reporting issues directly to Enforcement.

This week, no park violations have been observed, but staff have been investigating damage and vandalism to several town parks, and have made police reports on these incidents.

Municipal Enforcement Officers now have the authority to issue significant fines to individuals violating regulations including gatherings of more than 5 people or using closed equipment and amenities, and will give tickets if necessary.

Question: When will the Town be in a position to comment on the cancellation of permits (such as for minor baseball) and use of facilities for the upcoming season?

Answer: At this time, all permits have been cancelled through the end of June. The decision on whether or not it will be possible to allow summer permits will be considered at the April 21 meeting of council in order to allow organizations to plan their season. We are following closely the advice from the Province as well as information from minor sports groups in determining when we might be able to reopen facilities.

Question: County waste transfer sites have been reopened, but the new restrictions are causing issues and a resulting increase in illegal dumping. Can this be reviewed, including opening on Saturday and allowing more latitude on what is essential?

Answer: Waste collection is a County of Simcoe service, but Mayor Keffer will inquire about this.

Question: Is there work being done to plan for a post-pandemic world, in particular to boost the economy?

Answer: MP Scot Davidson agreed that this is important and that a post-pandemic economic committee should be started both at the federal level as well as locally. MP Davidson encouraged local businesses to look at the support being provided by the Town through partner agency Nottawasaga Futures. (www.nottawasaga.com)

Question: Why are stores going to be open on Good Friday and Easter Sunday when Premier Ford said they wouldn't be?

Answer: Following the Town Hall, staff confirmed that a ban was not placed on stores opening on these days.