

Legislation Text

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**DEPUTATIONS REGARDING MOTION 21-G-075 CONCERNING WATERFRONT ACCESS AND BEACHES
- SUMMARY OF COVID IMPACTS AND ADDRESSING GROWTH - RELATED IMPACTS**

The following individuals provided Deputations regarding motion 21-G-075 concerning Waterfront Access and Beaches - Summary of COVID Impacts and Addressing Growth - Related Impacts.

1. Shelley Brook expressed her gratitude to members of Council and City staff for working with residents concerning the Wilkins Beach area and proposed changes made to the rehabilitation plan. She advised that as a local community member and avid user of the beach, she suggested that the maintenance of the beach continue by the City to take care of the sand in order to maintain the health of the beach for residents and the whole community.

Councillor, M. McCann provided a summary of the changes and proposed amendments associated to motion 21-G-075 and the proposed plan for Wilkins Park that resulted after several discussions between members of Council, City staff and residents. He advised that the proposed amendments will be considered later in the Council meeting.

2. Gary Ray commented on the progress made since meeting with Councillor McCann since the report was initially presented to General Committee. He described the beauty of Wilkins Beach and the surrounding areas during all seasons, and the enjoyment that Wilkins Beach has brought to his family and friends. Mr. Ray addressed his concerns with shutting down the Wilkins Beach this year, and the negative impacts that it would have to the local Community. He commented on his appreciation for the City adopting a minimal approach to intrusion in terms of fixing the current issues and approving a plan that can be adopted by the Community, and not just Council. Mr. Ray suggested more communication between the City and residents to keep all parties aware of the issues.
3. Carolyn Ray advised she was unaware of the proposed plan until a couple of weeks ago. She expressed her belief of taking for granted the beauty of the beach and how much it takes to care for the beach that is undertaken by the City. Ms. Ray thanked the City and reiterated the importance of regular maintenance of the sand, especially in the spring due to the winter months leaving significant gullies that go all the way through the beach. She suggested that communication is an important and essential part of caring for the beach to make residents aware of changes such as parking restrictions to prevent tickets issued unnecessarily.
4. Jeff Hathaway spoke on behalf of Scales Nature Park that runs a large turtle conservation project across most of Central Ontario. He commented that they often travel to areas to try and find places that are good for turtles, count how many are left and take actions to try and protect them and reverse their population decline. Mr. Hathaway advised of the discovery of four turtle species being present in the City, and provided information associated to the four species. He discussed the history and life expectancy of adult turtles, and items the population is dependent on to survive. Mr. Hathaway advised of the challenge for them across Southern Ontario due to a lot of threats, including road mortality and the loss of their habitat.

Mr. Hathaway advised that Wilkins Park is a good example of a natural nesting site with its sand surface for nesting and the sun exposure which provides the temperature that eggs require. He

commented on Wilkins Park being one of the very few natural sites available to turtles and is likely used by turtles. He noted his concern if the beach was to be covered with rocks and the impacts to the turtle population in the area.

Mr. Hathaway discussed the Scales Nature Park's ability to train community volunteers to collect information about the turtle species in the City and then reporting the data. He advised that the organization would be happy to work with City, Councillor McCann and members of the local community who are interested. Mr. Hathaway noted they have funding to do so and offered to help make sure that not only the beach is protected, but the turtles are too.

Members of Council asked a number of questions to Mr. Hathaway and received responses.

5. Jill Richmond advised that she would be providing her Deputation and would also be speaking on behalf of Elizabeth Thomas.

Ms. Richmond provided her background information that included being a new resident to the City, a Physiotherapist with 24 years experience in mental health. She discussed the importance of people being able to enjoy the outdoor experience of going to the beach and suggested that the City needs to keep the beach open for local residents of Barrie. Ms. Richmond commented that they purchased a home in the Wilkins Beach area for her family to have the beach experience and that they are looking forward to seeing the beach in the summer. She discussed her concerns with the parking pilot project for residents to bring guests in and that during COVID we should be encouraging people to stay home, with the project being better suited for the following year. She noted that the pilot project could cause possible overcrowding at Wilkins Beach and other beaches similar to what was experienced last summer.

Ms. Richmond advised that Ms. Thomas' main concerns were related to parking and litter on the beach and that she wanted vehicles towed without a warning when parked between 8:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. in the restricted area for City of Barrie passes only. She noted that Ms. Thomas also has suggested putting cameras at the entrance to the park, with the additional signage.

6. Lindsay Knight (Wagner) spoke on behalf of Jake Vella.
7. Lindsay Knight spoke on behalf of Amy Mitchell.
8. Lindsay Knight advised that she is speaking on behalf of Amy Mitchell, Jake Vella and a group of neighbors in the area. She discussed the role that Wilkins Beach has played in her life and in the lives of the surrounding community. Ms. Knight advised that the group of residents she is representing is willing to meet the City halfway to take care of the environment and assist the City to allow the beach to stay open, keeping the sand, and well maintained. She commented that City staff and members of Council have been working with residents over the last week to revise the plan so that a portion of the sandy beach can potentially be maintained, some additional educational signage and fencing along the creek. Ms. Knight asked that a more in-depth environmental assessment be conducted on the pond and Wilkins Beach to help evaluate the impact of the wash out from the pond and any other environmental concerns relating to the beach to accurately understand the full environmental impact.

Ms. Knight provided suggestions that included possible policies to help control beach traffic that have impacted the neighborhood, the environment of the beach with parking and by-law enforcement, increase parking violations and enforce with no warning and tickets are issued on the first offense, and that the City needs to take the time to examine the social and mental impacts on the community by removing the beach area, and the impacts of the loss of the beach for the neighborhood and the City.

Ms. Knight discussed the decision in the plan to delist the beach and totally abandon maintenance on it. She advised that they agree with delisting Wilkins Beach, but are against abandoning the maintenance, specifically no garbage collection, the removal of the buoys and the sand replacement and maintenance.

In conclusion, Ms. Knight commented that there are gaps in the plan that need to be filled before the City approves the plan. She asked that moving forward, Wilkins Beach be delisted, but to continue with the maintenance of the beach for the community to have a place that is positive for peoples' mental health.

Members of Council asked a number of questions to Ms. Knight and City staff and received responses.

9. Leslie Zardo spoke on behalf of Kingswood Subdivision. She discussed her background as a resident of Barrie for several years and that she moved to the Kingswood area to enjoy walks on the trails that wind to the beautiful Wilkins Beach. Ms. Lardo advised of the positive impacts that having trails and beach in the area on her mental wellness and health. Ms. Zardo questioned how big the beach will be with the proposed plan, as she felt that according to the diagram it seems to be less than half of the current usable size that it is currently.

In conclusion, Ms. Zardo advised that the beach area is important to the needs of regeneration to the fish populations, the turtle colonies, plants, trees and especially to the people of the community. She asked that the City do their best to maintain Wilkins Beach.

Councillor McCann provided a response to concerns raised in Ms. Zardo's Deputation.

10. Lindsay Knight spoke on behalf of Jeff and Jennifer Aube.
- 11 Mayor Lehman called upon John Wiens to provide a deputation, and he was not present to provide the deputation.
12. Apryl Munro advised that she is pleased with the changes made to the plan thus far, and that she would like to see a little bit more. She discussed her concerns with a lack of garbage cans by the beach, noting that often garbage cans are overflowing, and needles have been left on the beach during the winter. Ms. Munro advised that she supports closing the peninsula and cleaning it up, that the educational signage is great idea, and that this area needs to be made a priority like the other parks with more maintenance.
13. Linda Campbell provided an overview of the community surrounding Wilkins Beach and what they have been advocating for over the last 20 years, including noting the daily issues in the Wilkins Beach area. She discussed issues with teens partying on the beach, garbage issues, the need for additional pickup for overflowing garbage cans on the weekends, and barriers for issues with snowmobiles on the path.

Ms. Campbell provided a summary of the discussions that began in July, 2019 with the Mayor, the Ward Councillor and City staff to discuss the issues in the Wilkins Beach area and in delisting Wilkins Beach and have it removed from the list of beaches on the City's and Tourism Barrie's webpages.

Ms. Campbell asked that residents be able to actively participate with the City and she suggested that an individual be appointed from the community to be the liaison between the community and the City to bring issues forward in a timely manner and an opportunity to be a part of the solution.

Ms. Campbell acknowledged the damage to Wilkins Beach and the environmentally protected lands that surrounds their community. She advised that they have worked very hard over the years, and she

recommended that Council visit the Facebook page called "Save our Sands" to see the extensive history, pictures of the community and the support and events taken place in the neighbourhood.

In conclusion, Ms. Campbell advised that the community is hoping that the City can identify that the response and desire from this community to be part of the solution, and to participate in the hard work that it takes.

14. Aaron Hendriks advised that he reiterates the comments made by Ms. Campbell. He discussed the proposal for the beach and he noted the change of not getting rid of the sandy area and the active uses on the sandy areas. Mr. Hendriks commented that they would be actively using the sandy area for swimming, sunbathing, sitting and just having fun with the family.

Mr. Hendriks addressed the erosion that over the past seven years has been getting worse with more severe storms taking place. He explained the effects that the storms have on the beach and causing the significant erosion. Mr. Hendriks noted that the erosion will continue if it is not addressed properly, and that a full solution is needed to prevent this type of erosion in the future.

Mr. Hendricks discussed the parking issues and concerns with ticketing in the Wilkins Beach area. He provided suggestions to the parking issues that included first ticketing and then towing of vehicles that are in violation and extending the radius of prohibited parking without a resident pass.

Mr. Hendricks addressed the issue of garbage in the Wilkins Beach area. He suggested an increase in the number of containers that are covered to prevent blowing of garbage, and more frequent maintenance especially over the weekend to empty the cans. He advised in speaking with Councillor McCann of having more community influences and a hotline they can call for issues such as seeing smoke in the woods where someone must attend to as fast as possible to address the issue and eliminate the risks.

Councillor, J. Harris asked a question to City staff and received a response.

15. Claire Elliott advised she is in support of the comments already stated by fellow community members tonight. She commented that to close or permanently change the beach would have a huge impact on the community, however she noted after listening to all the changes, they must be made. Ms. Elliott discussed the enjoyment her family has in living in this neighbourhood, and having the beach or the sand, brings joy and well-being to her family and knowing that it is a safe place for children and community to be.

Ms. Elliott advised that she is interested in seeing any hybrid options that accomplished ecological restoration to the creek and then peninsula while also maintaining sandy beach for swimming.

Councillor McCann provided a response to concerns raised in Ms. Elliott's Deputation.

16. Mayor Lehman called upon Brandon Elliott to provide a deputation, and he was not present to provide the deputation.
17. Jill Richmond spoke on behalf of Elizabeth Thomas.
18. Mayor Lehman called upon Steve Cummings to provide a deputation, and he was not present to provide the deputation.
19. Mayor Lehman called upon George Cummings to provide a deputation, and he was not present to provide the deputation.

20. Julia Harrison withdrew her Deputation.
21. Leonard Feinstein advised that in his opinion that it is excellent that there is going to be wildlife being nurtured in the creek and in the area, providing learning and education to the community to participate in. He agreed that fencing off the creek area will make a big difference. Mr. Feinstein discussed the maintenance of the beach and he suggested that the focus should be on Wilkins Park being maintained the same as all other City Parks and that maintenance of the beach is an integral part of daily use at the beach.

Councillor McCann asked a number of questions to City staff and received responses.

22. Cindy Giller withdrew her Deputation.
23. Mayor Lehman called upon Greg and Tracy Steffens to provide their deputation, and they were not present to provide the deputation.
24. Tim Tremain advised that he echoes the comments made by the community on this matter and that he believes it shows of how valuable this beach is to the community. He commented on living in the area with his family and to swim on what is one of the only shallow access sandy beaches on that side of the shore.

Mr. Tremain discussed the privilege of walking the beach with Mr. Hathaway and Councillor McCann earlier in the week, and that he was pleased with the actions undertaken by members of Council and City staff in such a short time. He advised that in his opinion the beach under normal usage is kept very well, and with the extenuating circumstances of last summer by a small number of people, who were not using it for what it was originally intended for and were trying to have family reunions and put-up tents and barbecues. Mr. Tremain noted that some of the groups tried to clean-up after themselves but had no where to put the garbage.

Mr. Tremain advised that he is supportive of Mr. Hathaway's suggestions and his enthusiasm to save the turtles species in the beach area, and he volunteered to organize the community ambassadors to be trained on how to find turtle nests.

Mr. Tremain discussed the active community that would step-up and assist in maintaining the beach and trails and the four schools and two high schools that use this area as an active classroom.

Mr. Tremain addressed his concerns with respect to the environmental impacts, and erosion issues, delisting the beach would preclude from putting buoys back out and that they would not have the active safety barriers for the young children that swim in the shallow waters, and that they also create a barrier and keeps boats from entering and using the sand beach. He noted that replacing the buoys with removable cement blocks would be more environmentally harmful than not having barriers that would keep boats from the shoreline.

In closing, Mr. Tremain advised that he would be happy to help in any way to organizing the community in saving a valuable community asset.