

MULMUR TOWNSHIP DISCUSSION MEETING ON ROAD NOISE/SPEEDING

On October 27, 2017 Cheryl Russel and Don MacFarlane, attended a meeting on behalf of MC² at the Dufferin County OPP station. This meeting was set up by members of the Mulmur Police Services Committee to discuss the ongoing problems of speeding on our roads, an issue that creates significant safety problems as well as major noise disturbance for citizens. The Committee replaced its normal agenda with an open forum that aimed to get citizen input on the issues, as well as identifying potential solutions to the problems.

The meeting was chaired by Mulmur Councilor Greg Lloyd and was attended by the OPP Staff Sergeant for Dufferin County Nicole Randall, Councilor Keith Lowry and Mulmur Director of Public Works John Willmetts. In addition, about twenty citizens of Mulmur participated. The Shelburne on-line paper, "The Shelburne Freelancer" also sent Alex Sher to cover the meeting.

The meeting was the latest effort by citizens to get Council and OPP attention to dealing with the noise and speeding problems. This issue has arisen regularly over the past ten years, and in spite of significant citizen frustration no solution has yet been found. The lack of solutions results from many difficulties. When the Council has worked on the problem, there has been difficulty in engaging interest from the OPP detachment. Requests for police action from regular patrols, and from dedicated weekend overtime shifts, have not been adequately dealt with. The Council and many citizens groups have been frustrated and continue to look for solutions..

This summer the problem, particularly caused by motorcycles, but also involving automobiles, has been particularly bad. In fact, it has seemed to many residents that each year is worse than in the past. Director Willmetts provided very useful information from a speed measurement program he initiated this summer, showing where the worst problems are, and identifying the best places on which to target action. His data showed how serious this problem has become.

It has been clear that any actions taken to address the problem are ineffective if not reinforced by police presence and action. It was clear at this meeting that the Council, Mulmur staff, the OPP and many involved and impacted citizens are in agreement that now is the time for action. The key element of this meeting was the recognition that while we can use past experience for learning, we need to look forward and find solutions that can change the picture.

The key elements of the solution are as follows:

- 1) **CITIZEN ACTION:** Staff Sargent Randall pointed out that any requests she makes for extra resources must be supported by citizen requests/complaints. The more input she gets the better her chance of getting the needed

manpower to deal with the safety/noise issues. Every call to the detachment becomes part of her records and is used to deal with resource requests. The suggestion here is to phone in complaints about noise and speeding.

The process of making the call is important. The number to call is: **888-310-1122**. When the machine answers the call it says "For an emergency, push 1. When you push 1 you will get an officer answering your call. Staff Sargent Randall said that **for noise and speeding complaints you should push 1**. The officer will register your complaint and will often send a patrol car to take your input or he/she will take other actions.

The advice here is to call any time you see or hear speeding or unusual noise. You will get immediate action and the Staff Sargent will have more data for resource requests.

- 2) **POLICE PRESENCE:** It was clear to all attendees, particularly the Staff Sergeant, that no matter what actions are taken by the Township and citizens, there will be no impact without enforcement ... and the resulting perception by drivers that there will be some risk in speeding on our roads. It appears that Dufferin County has the reputation of being a no enforcement/no risk area, which attracts drivers who want to speed.

Several suggestions were tabled:

- The Township could pay for weekend overtime shifts by OPP officers, who would patrol our roads on sunny weekends when speeders are attracted to Mulmur. This has not worked in the past, as there have never been adequate volunteers to accept the overtime work. This approach could be tried again and might work better with the new Staff Sergeant organizing the work.
- Mulmur could duplicate the Mono approach of hiring a dedicated half time OPP officer. This officer takes direction from Mono staff/Council, patrolling where they want and when they want. The cost on this is in the \$80,000 to \$90,000 per year, so for Mulmur this seems unlikely.
- The Staff Sergeant mentioned that even having an OPP car in view has an impact as drivers slow down. She said that her officers have significant paperwork to do, which can be done in their cars. She could suggest that they park in one or other of the high speeding areas and that that would slow things down.
- Regular patrols could be added to pressure areas, but there are not significant resources on weekends to allow this to happen on a regular basis.

It is clear that there are options that can improve police presence. Staff Sergeant Randall gave every indication that she takes this problem seriously, and that she is ready to work with Council and with citizens in finding solutions.

- 3) **MUNICIPAL SAFETY ZONES.** The idea of using “School Safety Zones” and “Community Safety Zones” was introduced. These are zones that are designated for reduced speed in school areas and in other areas of denser housing or increased danger because of road conditions. The designation is determined by municipal councils and is enforced by municipal by law. Enforcement is by the Township By Law Officer, or another delegate assigned by the Township.

Some towns assign enforcement to an outside company which sets up a photo radar system and lays charges against speeders. Other towns just depend on the drivers not wanting to risk a fine/points. Such zones might be set up, for example, around the Primrose School, on areas of River Road where there have been accidents, and other on high risk areas. (Rosemont and Everett are examples in our area of such zones.)

Safety zones provide a sound option for dealing with speeding and get at the heart of the community issue: that the most significant aspect of speeding is the safety risk.

- 4) **OTHER STEPS:** Several other ideas surfaced at the meeting.

- Improved/expanded signage aimed at slowing speeders.
- Regular reports on number/location of serious/fatal accidents.
- Road striations which notify drivers upon entering dangerous slow-down areas.
- Portable speed warning signs, as seen currently on Airport Road at Stanton and around Mulmur Township.
- Placement of additional Stop Signs in dangerous places, such as the corner of River Road and 2nd Line E. in Terra Nova. The aim with these signs is safety, but should also slow down traffic.
- Upgrade our Noise By Law. Much of it works well, but it needs to be fine tuned to cover the changing environment that we are experiencing.

All of these actions would assist in dealing with the speeding/noise problem, but would have significant impact only with increased police presence.

FOLLOW UP ACTIONS

There is every indication that the Council and Staff are prepared to deal with this issue, as is the OPP. But, as we have seen in the past, this is a complex and challenging problem which tends to get set aside when there are no easy answers. Where do we go next to keep this matter in focus.

- A) Councilor Lloyd and Public Works Director Willmets are going to open a discussion at Council regarding the speeding/noise issue. They intend to continue soliciting community input. This Plan should be in place soon and necessary steps planned for well ahead of the summer speeding season, which will start next May.

This Plan should include input and involvement from Staff Sergeant Randall. Specific items to be covered: establishment of Safety Zones; striations installed in appropriate places; weekend overtime shifts planned and set up to allow for increased OPP presence on weekends; additional signage designed and installed; ongoing measurement of speeding; photo-radar considered; and other new ideas introduced as the problem is further evaluated.

- B) A plan for OPP involvement should be put in place soon. How do we improve presence?
- C) A publicity effort should be undertaken by the Township, by MC2, and by others to increase public input.
One priority will be to ensure that all citizens know the emergency phone number and that it is extensively used on weekends when speeding and noise are at their worst.
There should be quarterly citizen meetings, as the one described here, to update on what is being done and how it is working.

SUMMARY

The community meeting included at least two motorcycle riders. They emphasized that they want safe quiet roads to ride on. One of them was forced off the road by a speeder. Law abiding drivers/riders will always be welcome here. What our community wants is to peacefully and safely enjoy and share our beautiful place to live. Vehicles will always be a part of this, but they must be driven safely, obeying our laws.

This meeting was encouraging in that it was initiated by Councilors who want public input on this serious problem. Clearly the public can be energized when asked to participate in addressing what has for years been a major irritant, and one which has seemingly been ignored. At this meeting we saw more information than ever before on speeding and on particular danger zones. It appears that the Council, Staff and OPP are ready to deal with this. We are urging citizens to support this effort by sending letters to Council, to Mayor Paul Mills or CAO Terry Horner (asking that the letter be placed in the Agenda Package so that it is in the public record).

Cheryl Russel, Don MacFarlane