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Apr 23, 2025 · 100 tweets · [adamadonaldson/status/1915161854915072235](https://twitter.com/adamadonaldson/status/1915161854915072235)

Coming up at 6 pm, it's this month's regular meeting of city council. Stand by for live coverage:



**City Council Preview – What's on the Agenda for the April 23, 2025 Me...**

Since Committee of the Whole this month landed on April Food's Day, we can think of the regular council meeting as a late Easter treat. The treat though is that the main focus of this meeting...

<https://guelphpolitico.ca/2025/04/11/city-council-preview-whats-on-the-agenda-for-the-...>

First item, Private Tree Protection By-law Update. No new info, but there's a delegation from Jonathan Harris.

Harris is an arborist and works in multiple municipalities. He says the original bylaw before it was changed at CoW made sense. Most trees in Guelph are under 30 cm (90% he says), and it's missing a canopy preservation bylaw, incentives to get more trees planted.

Harris adds that the canopy was heavily effected by Emerald Ash Borer, and if there was a rebate program in place they might have been able to save more. City needs a preservation plan and increase outreach and uptake.

Goller asks what a preservation plan would look like. Harris says cash-in-lieu could be used for preservation or rebates; cities have between \$250-\$1000 per person and it would also be able to allow the city to collect data on types of trees being planted.

Chew asks to clarify, we're going to 30 cm too fast? Harris says yes, need to ease into and raise awareness. Public might see it as a cash grab too and see a tree as not theirs.

Chew asks Harris' business interest, this makes it harder to educate people? Harris says it's not about what's good for his business, he's concerned that the immediate stringiness of the bylaw will turn people off from planting trees.

Caron agrees more education is important, but asks about Harris assertion about planting less trees at 30. Harris says its about "successful" plantings, how much maintenance are they doing? How many replants?

Billings asks if Harris draws the line at 50 cm. Harris says that he believes that recommendation was not made lightly.

Recommendations:

**Recommendation:**

1. That Council endorse the proposed updates to the Private Tree Protection By-law ("Private Tree By-law" or "By-law"), as attached to report 2025-25 as amended, and repeal the existing Private Tree Protection By-law 2010-19058.
2. That staff be directed to place the proposed updated Private Tree By-law as amended, on the April 23, 2025 agenda for final adoption after which the By-law will come into effect.
3. That a by-law be enacted to amend the applicable User Fees By-law 2025-21052 to include the permit fees set out in report 2025-25 when the Private Tree By-law takes effect.

Downer/Goller move the recommendation.

Downer asks about staff comments on other tree preservation programs. Staff says it's part of the long-term plan to develop something like that. Phase #4.

Downer says that sounds like it's 20 years out.

Downer asks if there's any benefit to looking at a split between new planting and conservation. Staff says they can look at that in the short-term, 5 years. They have a work plan they're working off of, proactive maintenance of City-owned trees.

Downer: So could council tell staff to make the preservation program a more immediate priority?

Staff: The work plan evolves and changes with circumstances. Currently working on back orders and planting priorities. Don't want to get ahead of themselves. Can report back.

Goller asks if there's an accurate mapping of what trees are on private lots. Staff says that's no feasible, all they're able to map is the canopy itself.

Chew asks if they can get an info report on the conservation programs in other cities? Staff says they could put something like together in an email or info report.

Allt asks about age of 30 cm tree vs 50 cm. Staff says that's a hard question to answer b/c there's direct correlation between size and age. Yet. That's also on the work plan.

Busuttil asks about follow-up to tree planting programs like Take Root. Staff says they can't say for certain about follow-up, but there is longer term monitoring for replacement trees in the new bylaw.

Chew/Gibson move two amendments. He says that they need to put the bylaw in place first and then let it mature and educate people. Start at 40 cm, and then look at going further.

**Private Tree Protection By-law Update, 2025-25**  
Councillor Chew



1. That the Private Tree Protection By-law be amended such that the definition of a Regulated Tree includes any tree greater than 10 centimetres in diameter at breast height (DBH) on private lots greater than 0.2 hectares, and any tree greater than 40 centimetres DBH on all other private lots.
2. That City staff be directed to review the effectiveness and operational impacts of the amended bylaw over a two-year period and provide an information report to Council no later than Q3 2027. This report shall include a summary of permit volumes, service delivery impacts, and compliance issues; a review of canopy outcomes and private property concerns; and recommendations on whether to revise the DBH thresholds based on operational evidence and community feedback.

8:59

Billings asks about financial impact of 40. Staff says that the funding gap is \$16k from the original costs identified in CoW report. They will have to look at what further impacts will be.

Gibson says he thinks there are a "bunch of wins" here. We all want to protect max. number of trees, but 40 is a great compromise and is a sound document.

Allt asks about how easy it will be to deliver everything in rec #2. Staff says much of this work is all being done, but sure they can get \*all\* if done by Q3 2027, but it's being worked on.

Goller says this is 8% and not 14% with 30, but also wants a conservation program. Guthrie says Downer's got an amendment about such a program coming.

Caron asks to separate the recommendations.

Guthrie says he'll support the amendment, wants to meet in the middle.

#1: fails (Chew, Gibson and Guthrie in favour)

#2: approved unanimously.

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8:59

Billings says the bylaw was supposed to be affordable and no onerous, why can't people get baby trees at 4 cm instead of 6. Staff says they're going to take a look at flexibility when it comes to updating the tree technical manual, which does say smaller trees are an option.

Guthrie says he won't support b/c of the impact on staff resources, city budget and development costs. He reads from an impact email written by staff and notes that 3.5 week planning shortfall, and will impact overall review time. Plus bylaw and legal costs.

Downer asks about \$220k vs \$261k for 30 vs 50 cm and checks other numbers with staff. She says that in the report it also talks about ancillary benefits of trees. Maybe its worth the \$40k difference?

Caron adds that they talk a lot about cost but not a lot about return on investment. With 30 cm, that's about \$125 ROI per tree. Maybe we can factor that in.


Guthrie asks Allt to wrap it up, wants to call a vote. Allt says the city prides itself on being leaders of the environment, and if London can do it than Guelph can do it better.

Guthrie says he feels like this is being set up as for trees or against them. He was willing to support original recommendations, but happy to see the date in two years and be proven wrong.

Motion approved with Guthrie, Gibson, Billings and Chew against.

Additional recommendation from Downer.

**Private Tree Protection By-law Update, 2025-25**  
Councillor Downer



1. That staff report back on a canopy conservation plan in the short term in the updated Urban Forest Management Plan.
2. That a memo be included in the draft 2026 budget update for further consideration by Mayor Guthrie and City Council.

That one passes unanimously.

Final item: Vehicle for Hire Accessibility Fund – Request by Red Top Taxi for Vehicle Accessibility Modifications.

This first came to the Accessibility Advisory Committee last week, background below:

Since 2018, the City of Guelph has been collecting funds from Vehicle for Hire businesses like taxi companies who could not commit to providing accessible vehicles. There's around \$288,000 in the bank now and the AAC is essentially responsible for dispersing those funds.

Red Top Taxi is looking to access \$39,500 of those funds so that they might use them to modify a vehicle to make it accessible.

The AAC passed a motion at that meeting that said that they would gladly consider this \*after\* the City addressed the concerns about the laborious process of taking part in the TaxiSCRIP program.

Guthrie says that he felt that council needed to adhere to the fees collected by the policy and support accessible mobility services. This has nothing to do with the other \*valid\* issues that the AAC want to address.

Guthrie reminds everyone that they can only speak to the item that's on the agenda, and it's very "black and white": Do you want council to use money to pay for upgrade to a taxi vehicle from an account for that purpose.

Up first are Mohammad Iqbal, Debbie Kelly, and Christopher Wilson from Red Top Taxi. Wilson is the mobility manager. He says there's 6 mobility vehicles in the fleet and that's still not enough. They take people outside city limits, which mobility bus can't do.

Mobility conversion used to be \$60, and now it's \$100k. Just not feasible for RTC to pay out of its own pocket. Wilson says one of two vans he manages permanently out of service. It had 7,000 km on it. Without funding, the service is in danger.

Busuttil says this feels ill-informed on this, is Mobility Services tied to the driver or the company? Wilson says it's with the company. Does RTC keep data on ridership? Iqbal says last year they had 14,119 completed rides.

Busuttil says she hears from staff that there's a transit study taking place, and would love to see a report from RTC about their needs. Guthrie adds that they have one van that's end of life and they're asking for another. This is about can they have the money.

Busuttil says that she needs a lot more details and feels very uncomfortable with this. With procedure not completely out of whack, Guthrie asks DCAO Clack-Bush to go into deep background on this starting when Uber arrived in Guelph in 2018.

Clack-Bush notes that Guelph Transit Mobility service has big gaps: more demand than vehicles, service needed outside business hours, and out of town trips. Transit leans on RTC to fill those gaps. Only 6 available vehicles in the city.

Clack-Bush notes that this isn't an explicit Transit related item, so there's no transit staff here to answer question though she's doing her best.

Guthrie again says that this is about the question in front of us: Does RTC deserve the funds? Asks council to park all other Qs until they can answer that question. Busuttil says she's still struggling with the value for money question, but will stop.

Goller asks for clarity: They want \$40k from the City and RTC covers the rest? Wilson says that's it.

Goller asks about communications with users. Iqbal says they have a lot of longtime users who are aware of challenges and they try to work with them.

Richardson asks if they've budget for this money when it comes to fleet replacement. Wilson says yes.

Caton asks if they were away of Enabling Accessibility Fund through the Feds? No they're not.

Lorelei Root is the next delegate. She notes she relies on RTC to get around when she's using her wheelchair. So why did the AAC vote against? She says it's disappoint that the motion wasn't attached to the report (worth noting that the council report was same as AAC agenda.)

Root says the intent was to also use the funds for discounted cab fare for people with disabilities, and yet there are people like her who are unable to apply due to a barrier-filled application for the TaxiScrip program.

Root says this a prime example of the poor communication between the disabled community and the City, and it's why four members of the AAC resigned last week.

Allt asks about the intention for use of the money and Root says that since 2018 they've been pushing for Taxiscip changes and there's never been any discussion about using it to fund vehicle improvements. Also, AAC were supposed to have sole discretion.

Allt asks about the responsibility to consult. Root says that in this case it doesn't seem like the report or motion from the AAC were shared with council, which should have been a minimum.

Caton asks about how it costs more for disabled folks to use taxis. Root says wheelchair users have been charged for the time it takes to load and unload someone in a wheelchair (although that's not RTC policy). Also people with spinal injuries need softer (longer) routes.

Guthrie says he feels uncomfortable about the allegations that the company mentioned is not carrying itself with integrity.

Busuttill asks if this program comes to the AAC every year for review. Root says yes, and when they talk about it, it's always about improving access and how the TaxiScrip program needs overhauled.

Sarah Mathison is next. She says she came to Guelph 15 years ago and was greeted at the airport by RTC and she's never been charged for getting on and off. ("Thank you for saying that," Guthrie says.)

Mathison says winter is especially busy for Transit and RTC. Hopes to see more mobility taxis in Guelph.

Next is Anordul Cameron, former vice chair of the AAC. Like Root, he notes that they didn't reject the modification of the van they just said not at this time and that staff have repeatedly said that the \$\$ was meant for TaxiScrip program.

Next is Morgan Dandie. She says she watched the last meeting of the AAC and... Guthrie cuts her off.

Dandie: I'm talking to disabilities, sir.

Guthrie: Please don't interrupt me.

□

Dandie says this was not supported by the AAC because they want to funds to be used to the best benefit of the disabled community. There's also a review of the funds scheduled for next year, is not best to follow AAC and say "not at this time."

Last delegate is Maureen Oesch. She has issue with how this is being presented as "black and white", she understands the need for another mobility taxi, but this is a for-profit company asking for funds meant for public use. Asks council to make it make sense.

Oesch says that she thinks that there are a lot of people who have been pushed out to the margins and need those mobility services to make their way, and that means filling out a "massive" form and having a doctor handy.

Goller says that he understands that RTC doesn't generate enough revenue to cover the now high cost of the vehicles. Plus, still \$240k still in the account.

Guthrie interjects that he's talking about a separate issue, and that his numbers are a bit off, \$288k would be left.

Goller asks if this changes Oesch assessment and she says no. It's about the barriers that exist to getting access to the TaxiScrip program and the fact that staff been repeatedly asked for a review and we're making this decision so quickly.

Guthrie asks staff to respond to some of the information that's been shared. Clack-Bush says she won't comment on some things, but on RTC she says funds are collected, but in reserve and its very clear its meant for vehicle mods. So council can only say Y or N to the request.

Clack-Bush says that she's more than happy to talk about TaxiScrip b/c that came from transit operating budget, not this fund.

Richardson/Gibson move Recommendation:

That the request from Red Top Taxi for \$39,500 to modify one vehicle for wheelchair accessibility, be approved.

Gibson says he sympathizes with the AAC and understands their rationale (though misguided). There may be issues elsewhere, but this is straightforward yes or no.

Goller says he was concerned watching the AAC meeting, but he's happy with the clarity from staff.

Busuttil asks if she could apply for funds to modify her vehicle? Clack-Bush says it's for any vehicle for hire including limo or ride share.

Busuttil asks if there's ever any call for applications and if there's ever a review of the program. Clack-Bush says that there's been no review as of yet.

Allt says the report has some confusing details, is this a rec from staff, the AAC or both? Staff notes this was the report from the AAC agenda. Allt asks about delegated authority to the AAC. Clack-Bush said that was the way the bylaw was set up, apps go to AAC for review.

Allt: If AAC doesn't approve, doesn't that violate policy?

Clerk: Doesn't mean council can't review their decision or make a different decision.

Allt: So what does consult mean under AODA?

Clerk: Means bring item to body for discussion, but non-binding for decision maker.

Caron asks if the AAC is a delegated authority or do they manage the fund? Clack-Bush says they're going by wording in the bylaw, the AAC delegated to make a decision or recommendation, but final decision sits with council.

Caron clarifies: AAC wanted to pause til there was clarity in how to use the funds? Clack-Bush says this motion was related to the TaxiScrip program, which cannot be funded out of this account. It was mayor's call to bring this tonight.

Caron says there are two separate issues here and she's trying hard to keep them separate.

Caton says that once this bylaw is reviewed, the best bang for the buck will be mobility transit because there's a deficit there already.

Gibson thanks the mayor for bring this forward, but there's a bylaw, it's clear, and they have to follow policy. It's inappropriate to review the bylaw before dolling out funds, and does harm to the reputation of the city with the party in the room.

Goller asks if they can use the funds to buy a vehicle for transit? Clack-Bush says no.

Downer notes that the bylaw was meant to create mobility options, and she's struggling with the discussion here. There's a policy in place, RTC has come here under the existing policy, and now's a decision time.

Guthrie says he brought this forward b/c they needed to follow policy, and he doesn't like the narrative of "for-profit" because they can be "very nice". And no tax dollars are being spent on this. He thanks RTC for their service to this community.

Guthrie says the AAC "perhaps understandably, made a wrong decision". He's looking for win-win tonight, doesn't want controversy. Wants to help people be mobile in the city and have more options. Hopes council can do the win-win too.

Council votes 10-1 in favour (Caton against).

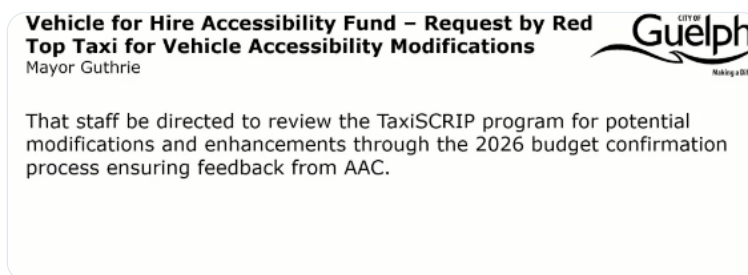
Guthrie calls a 9 minute break. Asks council to rally around action when we get back.

And we're back!

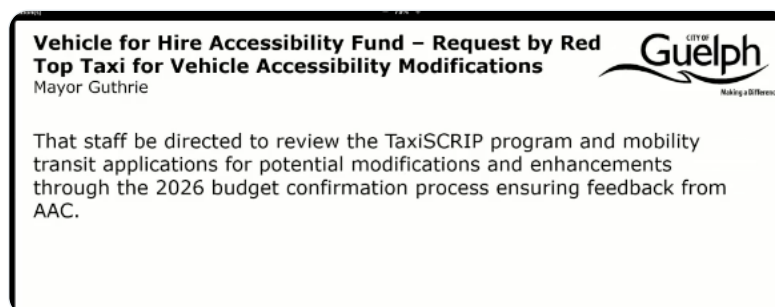
Guthrie offers a correction: he said .4% impact in difference between tree bylaw, when he meant .04%.

Guthrie says he wants to validate some of the AAC's concerns in the next motions.

First, direction to staff to review the TaxiScrip program for mods with assistance of the AAC.



Caton asks to add mobility transit applications. Caton/Busuttil vote to add it to the motion. And it passes.

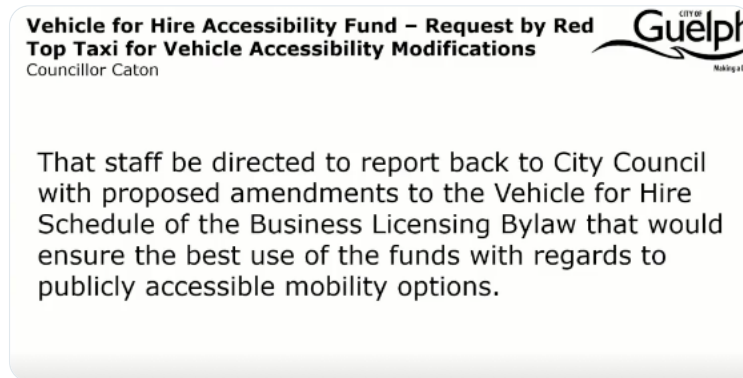


\*move to add the amendment to the motion, and that passes.

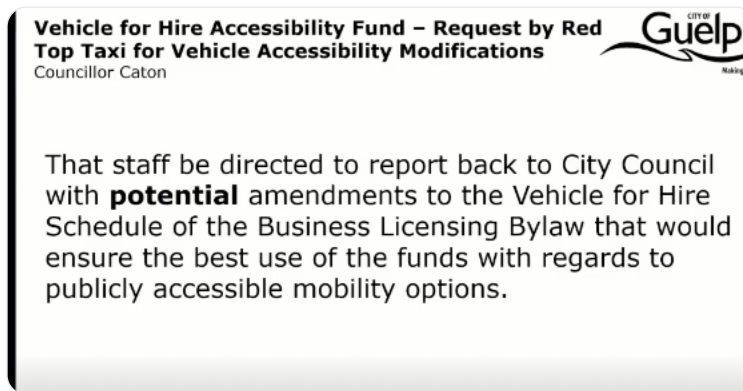
Clack-Bush notes that the review of the application is presently underway, and yes, this would include information already provided by the AAC. Council will get this ahead of the budget later this year.

Motion approved unanimously.

Caton/Allt motion:



Allt proposed a word change from "proposed" to "potential" so as to not pre-suppose an outcome.



Busuttil asks about timeline. Clack-Bush says they'll likely need to sometime in 2026 because of the engagement involved. Likely Q2.

Guthrie says it's fair to do the review. He doesn't want money to just keep accumulating.

Motion passes unanimously.

Bylaws of the week as amended (7.2 has a slight change).

**\*7.1 By-law Number (2025) - 21059**

A by-law to prohibit or regulate the injuring or destruction of trees on private property within the City of Guelph and to repeal By-law Number (2010)-19058.

**\*7.2 By-law Number (2025) - 21072**

A by-law to amend the Traffic and Parking By-law Number (2022) – 20698, as amended, being a By-law to regulate the use of Highways within the City of Guelph and the Traffic and Parking thereon.

**\*7.3 By-law Number (2025) – 21073**

A by-law to amend By-law Number (1993) – 14362, as amended by By-laws (1994)-14680;(1998)-15878;(1999)-16207; (2013)-19578, being a By-law to regulate the display, sale and setting off of fireworks;

**\*7.4 By-law Number (2025) - 21074**

A By-law to amend By-law number (2024) – 20994, being a by-law to delegate certain administrative powers and duties to City staff, to govern execution of documents.

**\*7.5 By-law Number (2025) - 21075**

A by-law to confirm the proceedings of a meeting of Guelph City Council held April 23, 2025.

**\*7.6 By-law Number (2025) - 21076**

A By-law to amend by-law number (2024) – 21002, as amended by by-law number (2025) – 21052, being a by-law to impose user fees or charges for services or activities relating to Public Services, Infrastructure, Development and Enterprise Services, Corporate Services and the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer.

**\*7.7 By-law Number (2025) - 21077**

A By-law to amend by-law number (2009) – 18855, as amended by By-laws (2010) - 18949, (2011) - 19144, (2011) - 19262, (2012) - 19396, (2012) - 19515, (2013) - 19613, (2013) - 19639, (2015) - 19904, (2016) - 20123, (2017) - 20149; (2018) - 20272; (2019) -20376; (2019) - 20415; (2022) - 20670; (2022) - 20733; (2023) - 20809, (2023) -20825, being a By-law respecting the licensing of businesses operating within the City of Guelph.

**\*7.8 By-law Number (2025) - 21078**

A By-law to amend By-law Number (2025) – 21056, as amended by By-law Number (2025) – 21061, being a by-law to establish the positions of screening and hearing officers for the purposes of administration of an administrative penalty system within the City of Guelph.

Goller asks to vote on 7.3 separately:

"A by-law to amend By-law Number (1993) – 14362, as amended by By-laws (1994)-14680; (1998)-15878;(1999)-16207; (2013)-19578, being a By-law to regulate the display, sale and setting off of fireworks;"

Bylaws of the week except for 7.3 approved unanimously.

7.3 approved 10-1.

There's cake in the council chamber for Guelph's 198th birthday thanks to Cllr Caron! So peace out!



@threadreaderapp unroll please!

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