

## **The Future of Maple Drive**

The intention of the public meeting held on **Thursday, January 21, at 7:00 PM** in Council Chambers is to collect public input to assist Town Council in making a decision regarding the future use of the vacant, town-owned lot that divides Maple Drive. Notice letters have been sent through recent utility bills of residents located in the neighborhood between Xavier Drive and Pine Street, while advertisements for the public meeting have been placed in *The Casket*. The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the issues surrounding Maple Drive, and outline the potential options to address key concerns.

### **I. Addressing a Concern for Public Safety**

The investigation into Maple Drive is motivated by concerns raised by Access Nova Scotia's Civic Addressing File and citizens residing in the neighborhood. Each party has separately observed that incorrect signage raises risks to public safety, while the discontinuous street created by a vacant lot along Northview Drive may potentially create confusion for public and emergency service providers responding to calls in the area.

Access Nova Scotia is the provincial department responsible for maintaining the database of all civic addressing information for the province. Nova Scotia's province-wide civic address system is used primarily to support emergency response services. It is also a valuable data source for the Province's own business applications and is integrated into federal corporate data sets. Concerns from the province centered on the fact that, according to the information in their database, the signage which ought to indicate 'Maple Drive' was incorrectly and inconsistently labelled as 'Maple Street' or simply 'Maple'. Town staff have examined this claim further and believe this to be the official name of the street, given that all parcel descriptions in deeds for properties located along the street list it as such; although, through time the road has been variously referred to as 'Maple Street' by both Town staff and residents. From the province's perspective, the signage issue, coupled with the fact that Maple Drive is divided into two portions by the vacant lot located along Northview Drive, can create confusion for emergency service providers responding to calls in the area, who recognize the street as Maple Drive as per the provincial database.

Residents of Maple Drive raised the issue with Town Councillors, citing concerns for their personal safety and a fear that emergency services providers may experience delays in reaching their residence due to the incorrect and inconsistent street signage. Fortunately to date, staff are not aware of any noted cases of delays in emergency service provision as a result of the signage along Maple Drive, although there has been anecdotal evidence to suggest that ambulance services have rerouted after encountering the 'dead end' near Hillside Drive created by the existence of the vacant lot. To address this concern in the meantime, Town staff have contacted the appropriate emergency services dispatch agencies notifying of this gap in the road's continuity and have replaced the signage to correctly indicate 'Maple Drive'.

### **II. A Brief History of the Vacant Lot**

The simple solution in matters such as this is to relabel a portion of the street in accordance with the Town's *Civic Addressing By-law* which permits the Town to change street names when necessary. However, this case is unique, complicated by the presence and history of the town-owned, vacant lot located on Northview Drive.

The property was transferred to the Town in 1969, and is frequently incorporated into Town engineering plans from the early 1970s as a ‘road allowance’ to connect Maple Drive to Hawthorne Street. In searching for information as to why the road was never completed, staff discovered that, in 1972, Council passed a motion to retain the division on Maple Drive, which delayed discussion on developing the throughway. Minutes from Planning Advisory Committee at that time reveal that suggestions were made to use the space as a “tot lot,” or mini-park area. While the “tot lot” suggestion did not reach Council for formal approval, the findings from the Planning Advisory Committee are significant because they offer a compelling explanation as to why the road allowance was not completed shortly after the lot was acquired.

By 1986, Council passed a motion to lease the land to a local resident who would be responsible for maintaining it as a public walkway. But in the late 1990s, the lot was placed under scrutiny once again because it was believed that the street as it was presently divided posed a risk to public safety. In 1997, Council passed a motion that funds be allotted for the purpose of completing the throughway; however, the road was once again not connected through. According to staff involved in the project at the time, residents in the area argued that it would impede their enjoyment of their property if a road was constructed. Now, the issue is once again being examined, centering on the same concerns for public safety that were noted in the late 1990s.

### **III. Options**

Council is examining a few options for addressing the concerns raised by Access Nova Scotia and residents in the area. These include, but are not limited to:

**1.) Connecting the road through:** This option would see the road allowance on Maple Drive constructed, as originally planned, making the neighborhood more accessible for emergency service providers. To clear the lot, undertake subgrade work, install granular bases, install curb & gutter/drainage, install asphalt pavement and install sodding, the estimated total cost is approximately \$70,000. While it would address a public safety concern, this option would result in a loss of green space for residents in the area, and potentially increase traffic travelling through that area of the neighborhood. It is worth noting that, if this option is pursued, the Maple Drive connection will be considered during budget deliberations in conjunction with the other capital projects the Town is planning to complete for 2016/17.

**2.) Renaming a portion of the Street:** This option would eliminate the confusion of having two portions of Maple Drive. Renaming a street is accomplished by a motion of Council, according to *Section 9(2)* of the Town’s *Civic Addressing By-law*, which gives Council the authority to assign, approve, and/or change street and private road names, when necessary. While this will come at not cost to the Town, it may create potential costs for residents who would be required to change relevant personal documentation to reflect the change in the street name.

**3.) Selling the land at market value for residential development:** The lot has been surveyed at 60 feet of frontage by 100 feet deep (or 6,000 sq. ft.). According to Section 8.2 of the *Land Use By-law*, the minimum lot size for development in an R1 zone for a single detached dwelling is 5,000 sq. ft., making the lot the appropriate size for potential residential development. If this option is pursued, it would maintain the discontinuity of Maple Drive, and therefore a portion of the street would have to be renamed to ensure the Town has properly addressed the public safety concern.

**IV. Going Forward: “How can I express my concerns to Council on the future of Maple Drive?”**

There are pros and cons to any decision that is made. The intention of the public meeting is to collect public input to address potential concerns of those impacted by each option. A final decision will not be made at this meeting – it is only intended for information-gathering purposes. The Town strongly encourages any interested residents to express their concerns by attending the meeting and/or by writing a letter or email addressed to our Mayor and Council. Any interested or impacted residents are encouraged to submit letters outlining their concerns addressed to the Mayor and Council by **February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016, by 4:30 PM**. By drafting and submitting a letter to our elected officials, you are ensuring that your position is considered through the deliberative process.

**Please click the following link for contact information for our Mayor and Council:**

[Contact information.](#)