

FRONT YARD DEER FENCING POLICY/BYLAW

PROPOSED BY – COUNCILLOR CAVENS

DATE – 23 SEPTEMBER 2024

DESCRIPTION OF INITIATIVE

This initiative seeks to clarify and update Esquimalt's fencing bylaws to address the ongoing issue of deer encroachment in residential gardens. By developing new bylaw language that reflects current community practices and addresses concerns about aesthetics, wildlife impact, and deer control, the Township can provide clearer guidance for residents, allowing them to invest in effective and compliant deer protection solutions.

BACKGROUND

Deer continue to disrupt gardening in Esquimalt, limiting residents to a small selection of deer-resistant plants. Many have resorted to building fences and using netting to protect their gardens, often in ways that don't comply with current bylaws, which restrict fence heights to 4-6 feet for aesthetic and neighborly reasons.

Back in 2021, Development Services staff prepared a report on the issue and documented existing structures that residents have constructed to keep deer away from gardens and plants. Council was unable to come to consensus at the October 18, 2021 Committee of the Whole (COTW) and asked staff to return with options.

Given that the deer population still causes issues for gardeners, Council should revisit the issue to provide clarity for residents about what is acceptable. Given that there have been relatively few bylaw complaints and/or enforcement, it would indicate that there is a consensus around what approaches are acceptable to the community.

Clearer guidelines would encourage residents to invest in permanent, aesthetically pleasing solutions without fear of being asked to remove them due to bylaw violations.

DESIRED OUTCOMES

- Present proposed deer fencing language at an upcoming COTW meeting for debate.
- Suggest bylaw language reflecting current community practices, addressing:
 - Visual permeability
 - Deer control
 - Minimizing impact on birds and other wildlife

ANTICIPATED SCOPE

Develop policy guidelines for deer fencing and present these guidelines for Council approval.