

**May 29, 2021**

**Mayor Christine Robinson and Members of the Municipality of West Grey Council**

**cc: Laura Johnston, Kodey Hewlett, Vance Czerwinski**

**The Durham and District Horticultural Society is writing to express our growing concern over the condition of the municipal parks in Durham and other communities in West Grey. The parks have deteriorated to a great extent over the past few years and are an eye sore not only for the people living in the municipality, but newcomers and visitors alike. Parks are instrumental as a selling feature for tourism and an attraction for people considering moving to the area. We would expect that members of council have seen the gardens and must realize that a plan is urgently needed and should be implemented as soon as possible. Knowing that covid restrictions have had an impact on every facet of municipal operations, a plan for the ongoing maintenance of the parks could have been created by now. Weeding and adding black mulch each year in no way maintains the parks, especially with them being in such terrible condition.**

**There are a total of 21 park areas in Durham alone and more in Neustadt, Ayton and Elmwood. We ask that our municipal council develop a strategy on how to effectively manage our parks and implement a plan as soon as possible. Foremost should be a decision on what should be done with the Durham "tennis court" garden area. It is an embarrassment to the residents of Durham and the municipality. We understand that there have been no funds allocated to the parks in West Grey in the 2021 municipal budget. This we do not understand. There are grants available through various agencies to help in funding for the care and maintenance of municipal parks. Have any of these grants been applied for by the municipality? Perhaps a committee of council should be formed to advise council on how to best make the most out of the garden areas of West Grey.**

**We would like council to understand that our society does not have the volunteer capacity to perform work in the vast number of gardens. We have a small group of volunteers that help us fulfill our gardening obligations to the Durham Legion and the Durham Clinic and Hospital gardens. We would also not be able to, nor should we expect to be, financially responsible to support the municipal parks. But, that being said, many of the municipal gardens had been planted, maintained and funded by our society. Between 2005 and 2014, the Durham and District Horticultural Society made payments to the municipality totaling \$42,771.33 for the purchase of plants, mulch, trees, Christmas lights and other items. The amount the society received in municipal grants during this time was \$22,500.00.**

**In closing, please provide proper oversight of the parks in West Grey and implement a proper plan on how to improve what should be our beautiful West Grey parks.**

**Officers and Board**

**Durham and District Horticultural Society**

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