

CITY COUNCIL

‘It’s going to look pretty ugly’: Save Bonnerworth group not giving up fight to stop Peterborough park redevelopment

The Coalition to Save Bonnerworth Park planning Sept. 16 rally exploring legal avenues.

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Coun. Keith Riel greeted a large group of people concerned about the planned redevelopment of Bonnerworth Park outside city hall in June. He remains convinced the city won't have the money to complete the project as planned and the money should be spend on housing and homelessness.

Joelle Kovach Metroland

By Sebastian Johnston-Lindsay Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Coalition to Save Bonnerworth Park isn't giving up on its mission to stop redevelopment of the public park on the corner of Monaghan Road and McDonnel Street, citing concerns about council's priorities on spending and social services.

A recent decision by council to cap the 2025 tax rate increase at five per cent, despite staff suggesting an increase of double that would be needed to maintain "status quo" services throughout the city, has residents concerned.

They believe that, should the \$4.4-million redevelopment at Bonnerworth move forward, there will not be enough money to cover the second phase of the project in 2025.

“It’s become not just a Bonnerworth issue,” said Richard Scott, a Save Bonnerworth member and former professional planner. “How is this money, this scarce tax money, being spent that affects all Peterborough citizens?”

“I hope council understands how this is going to look and it’s going to look pretty ugly.”

These concerns echo those of Coun. Keith Riel, who has spoken to media outlets, including the CBC, in recent weeks about his concerns about the feasibility of the park being completed within the council-approved budget.

Riel also [introduced a motion during an Aug. 12 council meeting that would have deferred six construction projects set for 2025](#) in order to save \$15.95 million, including the \$2,035,000 committed to the second phase of the Bonnerworth redevelopment.

Riel told the Examiner on Thursday that the \$4.4 million set aside for Bonnerworth “could be used for housing and homelessness.”

He remains convinced the city won’t have the money to complete the project as planned.

“I can see the \$4.4 million just being used to do sound abatement and all of the amenities just to put 14 pickleball courts in,” Riel said, referring as well to [the 272 trees now set to be planted at the park](#).

In a Sept. 4 news release, the Coalition to Save Bonnerworth outlined plans for a rally to be held outside of city hall on Sept. 16 at 5:30 p.m., when council sits for general committee.

Front of mind for members of the coalition is a copy of a draft site plan from April 2023, which the group claims in the release to have acquired through a Freedom of Information request. The group claims documents cast doubt on the approval and budget process undertaken for the project.

The Examiner requested the documents, but they have not been received.

However, the coalition did release a version of the proposed plan from April 2023, which was designed by Basterfield and Associates and differs from both the March 2024 plan presented at a public meeting and the [recently updated draft plan, both of which were provided by Landscape Planning](#).

The coalition’s news release also included details around fundraising to pay for fees associated with possible legal costs.

“We’ve been in serious discussions with a lawyer and who is well versed in municipal law,” Scott said, adding that the group is aware of “several” legal avenues available.

He he did not specify the grounds for any legal action, saying only the group is concerned about noise and the “unfair” nature of the process and the group’s insistence city council and staff have not acted in good faith.

In June, the coalition released a letter written by Kitchener-based lawyer Patrick Kraemer, which noted the group was “considering their options to hold the city accountable for the flawed process and decision-making that is happening.”

According to Scott, the group has yet to receive a response from the city.

— *With files from Joelle Kovach*



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