

Date: December 11, 2023
To: Mayor and Council
Author: John Norton, Chief Administrative Officer
RE: Extreme Holiday Light Displays and Shows

BACKGROUND

1. Reason for this Report

On Monday November 27, 2023, at a Regular Council meeting, Council approved amendments to By-Law 68-2023, being a Property Standards By-law.

One of these approved amendments to the Property Standards By-law created an exemption to the residential nuisance lighting restrictions by clarifying that holiday lighting is allowed during the time period of November 15 to January 15. The intention of this exemption was to ensure that holiday light displays are not caught by the prohibition on residential nuisance lighting.

At that same meeting on Monday November 27, 2023, Council directed Administration to prepare recommendations to help control and manage nuisances to neighbours caused by extreme holiday light displays and shows for which the Town has received complaints.

This report is in response to that direction from Council.

2. The Holiday Light Display and Show at 24 Marshwood Boulevard

For multiple years the residents at 24 Marshwood Boulevard have put on a large holiday light display and show. Visitors from all over the region visit the annual light display and show. It is a well-known and loved event for many, but not for those nearby neighbours who feel it unacceptably infringes on their otherwise quiet street.

On December 5, 2023, their website at <https://www.williamslightshow.com/> describes the show as:

“Our house has over 65,000 light bulbs that shimmer, twinkle, flash and change colors to holiday favorites such as Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer and Mr.

Grinch as well as some modern hits such as Blinding Lights and The Greatest Show and even a little old-school action with ACDC's Thunderstruck. With over 20+ songs this year we cant wait to see you at one of the shows.

Shows at 6:00, 7:00, 8:00 & 9:00 pm everyday except Wednesdays until December 26th! There is a different set of shows every hour and every day of the week. Shows are about 20 minutes long.”

Neighbours have complained about nuisances arising from the show during the month of December, especially related to the repetition of the same show over and over with flashing lights and music.

In addition, neighbours have complained about excessive traffic, safety issues, driveways being blocked, difficulty getting in and out of driveways, and the large lift used for setup and takedown during the months of November and January.

Administration has noticed as well that approximately 20 to 30 vehicles are idling for up to an hour to watch the show. This has an environmental impact and creates localized smell and air quality issues.

The show has expanded over the years and now includes donations to charity and the sale of advertisements on the large electric tree.

DISCUSSION

In prior years, Administration has advised Council that there is little that can be done without a By-law to establish some rules and boundaries for large and significant holiday light displays and shows.

Administration attempted in prior years to facilitate discussion and mediation between neighbours but to no satisfaction of any of the parties.

Administration believes it would be impractical and difficult to limit or prohibit large holiday light displays this month, December 2023. It is late in this holiday season to create policy or By-laws to address these concerns.

Administration recommends that if Council wishes to regulate large holiday light displays that it be considered for next year, November 2024. Recommendations could be prepared for Council's consideration in the first half of 2024.

Administration is considering a permit and license regime which would require any homeowner or tenant wishing to display a “large holiday light display and show” to get a permit, including approval of a plan to mitigate and manage nuisances to neighbours caused by the display and show.

If Council wishes to address this situation, Administration would recommend the following:

1. That Administration **BE DIRECTED** to prepare a report to license and provide oversight of large holiday light displays and shows, for the purpose of controlling and managing nuisances to neighbours, with the holiday season of November and December 2024.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

No financial considerations at this time.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

Taking positive action to minimize light pollution and the idling of vehicles should be encouraged.

CONSULTATIONS

Rob Frias, Chief Building Official
Daryl Flacks, Senior By-law Enforcement Officer
Kyla Ferguson, By-Law Enforcement Officer

PREPARED BY:



John Norton
Chief Administrative Officer