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**Sent:** Saturday, June 27, 2020 12:01 PM

**To:** Councillor Ferguson Willard <bwillard@southhuron.ca>

**Cc:** Mayor Finch <gfinch@southhuron.ca>; Councillor Neeb <aneeb@southhuron.ca>;

Deputy Mayor Dietrich <jdietrich@southhuron.ca>; Councillor Vaughan

<mvaughan@southhuron.ca>; Councillor Faubert <dfaibert@southhuron.ca>;

Councillor Oke <toke@southhuron.ca>

**Subject:** Regarding the request for exemption for African Lions in South Huron

Dear Councillor Willard and members of the South Huron Municipal Council

I wanted to take the time to respond to your request Barb for an explanation about my opposition to the proposal for allowing two lions to be kept on a property in South Huron. Brandon Vanderwel and Destiny Duncan have requested an exemption from the Exotic Animal Bylaw #29 -2014 to allow them to keep two lion cubs (“Pride” and “Joy”) on a property at 70114B Grand Bend Line near the Grand Bend Motorplex.

Reviewing the information about this proposal from Mr. Vanderwel and Ms. Duncan in the article in the Lakeshore Advance, I do not think that it would be prudent to give them an exemption from the existing bylaw #29 -2014 governing exotic animals. To begin with, their request does not fit under any of the circumstances for exemption that are listed in Section 3.1 of the bylaw (ie this isn't a veterinary hospital, public compound, designated pound, research facilities,

or alternative livestock). Mr. Vanderwel and Ms. Duncan simply want to keep these lions as pets.

The animals they are talking about are African Lions. I recognize that they were obtained as cubs, but cubs grow up to become adults. According to the information posted by the Toronto Zoo, a male lion can be anywhere from 1.7 to 2.5 metres long (not including the tail), stand 123 cm tall, and weigh in at 150 - 250 kilograms. The female lion will be smaller, (1.4 to 1.8 metres long, 107 cm tall, and weighing between 120 to 182 kilograms. These are large animals. In captivity lions can live up to 20 years - meaning that Mr. Vanderwel and Ms. Duncan are taking on a long term commitment to their animals, and also to our community - which means they will need to provide complete, fail-proof security for their animals potentially until approximately 2039.

African Lions are social animals, typically living in prides ranging from four to 20 females and young, and two to four adult males. A group of only two lions may not be sufficient to meet their social needs; what would council do if a request is made to add more animals to the mix?

While Mr. Vanderwel and Ms. Duncan say they have no intention of breeding their lions (Pride and Joy are siblings) it is unclear if the lions will understand this prohibition - perhaps the owners are planning on segregating them when the female is receptive to mating. Unless the owners are willing to spay or neuter their lions, then cubs could be a distinct possibility. Given that a typical litter is two to four cubs (and can range up to six), and that lions can breed every year, we could be talking about considerably more animals in a few years.

Mr. Vanderwel and Ms. Duncan have stated that they will build enclosures and fencing for the lions. To be humane they will have to be fairly large to provide adequate space, and have very high fencing (or a top) to ensure that the animals can not escape. Apparently lions can make considerable leaps both horizontally and vertically. Regardless of their precautions, Mr. Vanderwel and Ms. Duncan will also have to be prepared to deal swiftly and decisively with any escape - which means they would have to be prepared to shoot and kill their lions with a large caliber weapon - therefore they would be discharging a rifle in our community. (Note, the use of tranquilizer darts is not a realistic option, as the drugs have a limited shelf life, would have to be dosed according to the animal, and do not act with sufficient efficacy to immediately stop a lion.) Please note that this is not just a "hypothetical"; unfortunately shooting and killing was the only option available when a male lion escaped an enclosure at the Papanack Zoo near Ottawa in 2016.

Mr. Vanderwel and Ms. Duncan have stated that the property they are proposing to house their lions on is not residential, and surrounded by forest land which will offer their animals seclusion.

This property is immediately adjacent to the Grand Bend Motorplex, which presents two problems. First, the noise of the Motorplex will probably be upsetting to the lions. Secondly, imagine the scenario of a lion escaping while the Motorplex is holding a major event - especially if this occurred at night, when potentially a few thousand people are camping on the site. I appreciate Councillor

Faubert's admiration of the animals which she met under controlled conditions, but I don't know how well they would be received by someone in a tent.

While the African lion is native to the savannah and used to hot, dry climates, the reality is they are well suited to our environment as well (remember, we had our own species of cougars which lived here prior to the large scale clearance of the forests of Southwestern Ontario). Winter poses no great obstacle to them if they were to escape. The woodlots and fields of Stephen Township would be ideal habitat until they were located; and cattle, sheep, horses etc. would be ideal prey. A lion running flat out can reach speeds of almost 80 km/h in short bursts, and as large predators they pounce on their prey and haul it down with their claws and their body weight, and kill with a bite to the neck. They can easily outpace a human running for shelter. In the wild lions may roam over a very large area - which means that an escaped lion won't necessarily stay close to its home - how would an escaped lion be regarded in Dashwood, Crediton, Huron Park, or Exeter?. African Lions are magnificent animals in their own habitat, but do we really want them here in South Huron?

There are many compelling reasons why lions were included as prohibited animals on Schedule A of the Exotic Animal Bylaw #29 -2014, and I don't think there are sufficient reasons for granting an exemption for these two animals.

Thanks for your consideration  
Dave MacLeod

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Be proud of who you are! Be proud of what you do!

Toronto Zoo

<http://www.torontozoo.com/animals/African%20lion>

Live Science

<https://www.livescience.com/27404-lion-facts.html>

City News (report about the escaped lion which was shot)

<https://toronto.citynews.ca/2016/03/02/death-of-lion-who-escaped-zoo-enclosure-highlights-lack-of-regulationsadvocates/>