

LGLA Scenario Resident (Jack) Challenging Communicator

Jack grew up in the community and has lived in his current house with his wife for over 25 years. The house is in a more rural part of the community and is where they raised their family. They are now empty-nesters and the neighbourhood has built up though it continues to maintain a rural atmosphere.

A property beside Jack's was vacant for over a year before it was purchased about six months ago by an owner who is new to the community. At first Jack and his wife were pleased that they would have new neighbours anticipating the adjoining property would be tidied up and some of the obvious repairs to the house would be made.

The new neighbour operates a small trucking firm and now has a cargo van, a pick-up truck and two cube trucks parked on the property. The van and cube trucks are obviously "second hand" and the colour scheme of their previous owner is still recognizable. In the past few weeks, the neighbour has acquired an excavator/backhoe with trailer suggesting that he is expanding the business.

Traffic has increased greatly to the property often late at night and in the early morning. It appears that the neighbour is letting other truckers park their vehicles on the property for short periods of time.

The fence and garden are still in disrepair while the house continues to look in need of repair and paint, new eaves cleaned and likely a new roof. To Jack, the house and property doesn't reflect "pride of ownership" nor "respect for the neighbourhood."

Prior to Jack raising this issue with Councillor Joan, no issues with the property had been raised – it wasn't on anyone's radar and no official complaint had been made.

Jack wants the property cleaned up and the "commercial trucks" and other equipment removed immediately.

Challenging Communicator's preparation (property owner Jack):

As a long-time resident in the community and the neighbourhood, you have a sense of pride and commitment to the area. You and your wife have tried to be "good neighbours" according to your sense of what is right – you didn't raise any issues about the gradual decline in the upkeep of the property because you knew your previous neighbour had been in declining health for the past few years and you didn't want to add to the family's distress.

When the property sold, you anticipated that a young family would move in and quickly "set things right." After several months of continued decline in the neighbouring property, and the running of a commercial business in (as you understood it to be) a residential area, the appearance this past week of a backhoe was the last straw.

You haven't talked with the neighbour, never liked confrontation and were apprehensive about the large dogs barking when you walk past the property.

You are "mad as h***" and expect that someone isn't doing their job and that you won't be listened to. When you see Councillor Joan in the parking lot of the grocery store, you can't contain yourself. You are confident she will listen as you have known her for years and, in fact, had coached all three of her sons in local pee-wee hockey.

Being uncomfortable with conflict, you may not leap right into the discussion but rather exchange a few pleasantries with Joan while skirting the issues that are bothering you – on the other hand, you may not be able to contain yourself and jump right in!

Confrontation #1:

"Don't your staff enforce the bylaws anymore – are we supposed to take legal action?"

Confrontation #2:

“We didn’t cause any fuss for over a year as the house and property fell into a terrible state of disrepair – we knew that Mr. Olsen was dying but this is ridiculous - over six months with new owners and not a thing has been done – the house continues to fall apart and the yard is an absolute eyesore!”

Confrontation #3:

“The traffic on our road is unbearable – there are trucks at all hours of the day and night coming and going to the house – we can’t get a good night’s sleep – the neighbourhood has always been quiet and friendly but not anymore!”

Confrontation #4:

“And if the truck traffic isn’t enough, there are two massive dogs that back at everything – we can’t go into our yard – let alone – walk down the road – without these beasts barking and growling – I don’t know what they will do if they get out of their yard!”

Confrontation #5:

“It seems to me that they are running a trucking business out of a home – don’t you have bylaws prohibiting businesses being operated in a residential area. What are we paying our taxes for? This is an election year!”

Confrontation #6:

“And now we have all kinds of trucks from other companies and even backhoes parked all over the property – it looks like a used equipment sales lot – this isn’t just a guy with a delivery truck.”