

Section I – Items for Board of Directors Action

TO: Chair and Members of the Executive Committee
Friday, May 10, 2024 Meeting

FROM: Alexander Schuler, Associate Director, Property & Asset Management

RE: **COMMUNITY GARDEN LEASE - REENA INC.**
145 Lebovic Campus Drive, City of Vaughan, Regional Municipality of York, Don River Watershed (CFN 55554)

KEY ISSUE

Seek authority to lease to Reena Inc. (Reena) the community garden on Toronto and Region Conservation Authority-owned (TRCA) land located west of Bathurst Street and south of Lebovic Campus Drive, municipally known as 145 Lebovic Campus Drive, in the City of Vaughan, Regional Municipality of York, Don River watershed (CFN 55554).

RECOMMENDATION:

WHEREAS TRCA'S Board of Directors is in receipt of a request from Reena Inc. to enter into a lease agreement for community garden use of TRCA land located west of Bathurst Street and south of Lebovic Campus Drive, municipally known as 145 Lebovic Campus Drive, City of Vaughan, Regional Municipality of York, Don River watershed;

THEREFORE LET IT BE RESOLVED THAT TRCA enter into a lease agreement with Reena to use for the purpose of a community garden approximately 0.236 acres (956 m²), more or less, said land being Part of Lot 17, Concession 2, being parts 2 to 6, and part of part 12, on reference Plan 65R-35616, municipally known as 145 Lebovic Campus Drive, City of Vaughan, Regional Municipality of York;

THAT the lease with Reena be subject to the following terms and conditions:

- (i) that the term of the lease be for two years, together with an annual renewal option for the next three years at the sole option of TRCA;**
- (ii) that consideration be \$100 per annum, plus HST;**
- (iii) that the tenant be responsible for all approvals required for construction and operation of the community garden;**
- (iv) that the tenant be responsible for all costs associated with the development, maintenance and operation of the community garden;**
- (v) that the tenant be solely responsible for all costs associated with the removal of any fixtures/infrastructure on the lands under lease, at the end of the term, and to the satisfaction of TRCA;**
- (vi) that the tenant be required to obtain at their cost, all necessary licenses and permits, and comply with all applicable by-laws, rules, regulations, and laws governing the conduct, maintenance and operation of the community garden or anything in connection therewith; and**

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- (vii) any other terms and conditions deemed appropriate by the TRCA staff and solicitor;

THAT authorized TRCA officials be directed to take the necessary action to finalize the transaction, including obtaining any necessary approvals and the signing and execution of documents;

AND FURTHER THAT the Lease Renewal York Region Food Network Community Garden Report previously deferred at Executive Committee Meeting #1/24 held on January 12, 2024, and Board of Directors Meeting #1/24 held on January 26, 2024 (Attachment 3), be received for information.

BACKGROUND

At TRCA's Board of Directors meeting held on Friday April 30, 2021, the assignment of the community garden lease on TRCA lands from Shoresh Jewish Environmental Programs to York Region Food Network was approved (Res. # A92/21).

At TRCA Executive Committee Meeting #1/24 held on January 12, 2024, the TRCA staff report regarding the renewal of the lease for the York Region Food Network Community Garden located at 145 Lebovic Campus Drive, City of Vaughan, Regional Municipality of York, Don River watershed was deferred to allow discussion with other potentially interested parties.

While TRCA had received a request from York Region Food Network (YRFN) to renew the lease for the operation of the community garden for the 2024 to 2028 period, Reena Inc. (Reena) also expressed interest in site operations. While both organizations have partnered in the past, YRFN has declined a lease-partnership opportunity for this specific location, and will relocate from this site to allow the opportunity for Reena to enter into the lease agreement for the community garden on TRCA-owned land located at 145 Lebovic Campus Drive, City of Vaughan, Regional Municipality of York, Don River watershed

Founded in 1973, Reena is a non-profit organization which promotes dignity, individuality, independence, personal growth, and community inclusion for people with diverse disabilities within a framework of Jewish culture and values. In the past four years, Reena has grown by over 20%, is now assisting over 1,000 individuals in the GTA, is a leader in housing strategies with a portfolio that includes 32 group homes, 6 long term care partnerships, 135 supported independent living units and 2 intentional community residences, with a third planned.

Reena established the Reena Community Farm (RCF) in 2021 during the COVID pandemic. The RCF promotes sustainable agriculture at Reena's residential and intentional community locations, as well as community involvement in various neighbourhoods around the Greater Toronto Area. The goal of RCF is to improve the lives of individuals with neuro-diverse needs supported by Reena, as well as the greater community, while reducing the collective ecological footprint.

Currently, RCF operates an "Eat What You Grow" program which manages over 1100 accessible on-the-ground containers at 25 Reena residential sites, two Reena

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intentional communities, multiple Reena supported independent living locations and at seven neighbourhood partners locations. Reena plans to enhance their partnerships with organizations, local schools, businesses, and partners in the community to ensure the garden is accessible, inclusive, benefits the broader public and is maintained with high environmental standards.

Attachment 1 is a site plan illustrating the location of the subject lands. Attachment 2 is an orthophoto illustrating the location of the subject lands.

RATIONALE

TRCA has been administering agricultural leases on its land since the 1950s and aligns its work with urban agriculture on its properties, where appropriate, to improve the health of watersheds and communities.

Entering into a lease agreement with Reena will continue and enhance the use of the site as a community garden that fosters social inclusion, health, and food security in the Region of York. Through the lease of this site, Reena programming will be supported which encourages community engagement and partnerships, outdoor connectivity opportunities, and local, sustainable food production within TRCA's jurisdiction.

Relationship to TRCA's 2023-2034 Strategic Plan

This report supports the following Pillars and Outcomes set forth in TRCA's 2023-2034 Strategic Plan:

Pillar 3 Community Prosperity:

3.1 Connect communities to nature and greenspace

Pillar 3 Community Prosperity:

3.2 A culture of diversity, equity and inclusion contributing to community well-being

Pillar 3 Community Prosperity:

3.3 Informed citizens are conservation champions

FINANCIAL DETAILS

As per TRCA's *Agricultural Land Use Policy*, TRCA will establish and maintain fair market rent for its agricultural land under lease and will complete a fair market assessment by an independent appraisal company every five years.

The most recent fair market assessment was completed at the end of 2022 and has recommended a rent increase from \$77 per acre, to \$150 per acre, which equates to an increase from \$18 annually to \$35 annually, plus HST. To operate on a cost neutral basis, the rent will be increased to \$100 annually, plus HST, for each of the five years in this lease period.

Further, the market evidence considered for leasing agricultural properties reflect that leasing arrangements are typically gross in nature where no additional expenses associated with the property outside of agricultural operations, are paid by the tenant (i.e. Realty taxes). This approach is in alignment with current TRCA practice and TRCA

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will continue to absorb the property taxes, which are subject to change based on annual assessments or changes in classification. For the 2023 period, the annual costs of the taxes applicable to this lease agreement are approximately \$67.

Report prepared by: Lisa Valente, Supervisor, Facilities

Email: lisa.valente@trca.ca

For Information contact: Alexander Schuler, (437) 880-1950

Email: alexander.schuler@trca.ca

Date: March 7, 2024

Attachments: 3

Attachment 1: Site Plan – 145 Lebovic Campus Drive, City of Vaughan

Attachment 2: Orthophoto – 145 Lebovic Campus Drive, City of Vaughan

Attachment 3: Lease Renewal York Region Food Network Community Garden Report
January 12, 2024