

Item 10.4.

Section III – Items for the Information of the Board

TO: Chair and Members of the Executive Committee
Meeting #4/19, Friday, May 03, 2019

FROM: Michael Tolensky, Chief Financial and Operating Officer

RE: TORONTO WILDLIFE CENTRE AND MENNO-REESOR RESTORATION PROJECT

KEY ISSUE

Update on the Toronto Wildlife Centre Project and the Menno-Reesor Restoration Project.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the staff report regarding the update on the Toronto Wildlife Centre and the Menno-Reesor Restoration Project located at 6461 Steeles Avenue East, City of Toronto, be received.

BACKGROUND

At Executive Committee Meeting #3/19, held on April 5, 2019, Resolution #B32/19 was approved as follows:

THAT staff provide a report on the status of the Toronto Wildlife Project at the May 3, 2019 meeting of the Executive Committee.

At Authority Meeting #7/17, held on September 22, 2017, Resolution #A167/17 was approved as follows:

THAT staff report back to the Executive Committee at a future date on municipal funding support for the Toronto Wildlife Centre's proposal and lease for a new wildlife rescue, rehabilitation and education centre in the Rouge National Urban.

City of Toronto Council on February 12, 2018, adopted the following:

94. approve the 2018 Budget Committee Recommended Capital Budget for Toronto and Region Conservation Authority with a total project cost of \$31.163 million, and 2018 cash flow of \$19.830 million and future year commitments of \$11.333 million composed, in part, of the following:

96. City Council direct that the one-time 2018-2019 project titled "Menno-Reesor Restoration Project" to deliver high-quality habitat restoration, grading, fencing, access and landscaping work and planting of 100,000 trees at the 27 hectares site formerly known as the Runnymede site, be funded by \$3.5 million from the Tree Canopy Reserve (XR1220).

City Council on July 23, 2018, adopted the following:

1. City Council include restoration of the heritage barn and home at 6461 Steeles Avenue East, as part of the already approved 2018 Council Toronto and Region Conservation Authority capital budget allocation for the restoration project.

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City Council on January 30, 2019, adopted the following:

- 1. City Council request the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority to provide a grant to the Toronto Wildlife Centre that will allow the Toronto Wildlife Centre to produce architectural drawings and other work and reports necessary to facilitate the urgent repair of the heritage barn and home at 6461 Steeles Avenue East, as well as move to set up the portable donated by the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority from its current location at 5 Shoreham Drive, to its new location on the 6461 Steeles Avenue site, as part of the already approved Toronto Council restoration plan.*
- 2. City Council direct that funding for this initiative come from the previously Council approved \$3.5 million budget for the 6461 Steeles Avenue East restoration project, up to a maximum of \$450,000, subject to approval from the Chief Financial and Operating Officer, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, for a zero impact on the City of Toronto Capital Budget.*

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

Funding

TRCA staff has had numerous discussions over the last two years with staff in our partner municipalities. However, Toronto Wildlife Centre (TWC) has not to date been confirmed as a funding priority for our partner municipalities. TWC is continuing its efforts to raise funds for the new facility through its own means.

Lease and Ownership

Currently the subject property is part of the approximately 5,600 acres of TRCA-owned land included in a Memorandum of Agreement Respecting the Assembly of Lands for the Proposed Rouge National Urban Park. The transfer of the subject parcel is on hold pending resolution of the outstanding issues relating to the new Toronto Wildlife Centre facility. TRCA staff are currently in lease negotiations with TWC and Parks Canada.

Zoning Amendment

City of Toronto Council on March 27, 2019, amended Schedule 'A', to the Upper Rouge Hillside Community Zoning By-law No. 25278 which includes 6461 Steeles Avenue East by adding the following uses to the Agricultural Uses Zone (AG): Animal Shelter, Veterinary Hospital associated with an animal shelter, Intern Residence associated with an animal shelter and/or veterinary hospital and/or wildlife centre, Wildlife Centre, Educational uses associated with an animal shelter and/or veterinary hospital and/or wildlife centre.

Before introducing the necessary Bills to City of Toronto Council for enactment of the zoning amendment, TWC needs to submit a revised Functional Site Servicing Report, to the satisfaction of the City of Toronto's Chief Engineer and Executive Director, Engineering and Construction Services and TRCA, confirming that the private servicing system arrangements necessary to support the proposed development are being provided.

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Temporary Facility

TWC's current lease at Downsview Park ends on December 31, 2019 and as such, TWC is investigating temporary facilities for their operation until the new facility is completed. One of the options under review was moving the existing portable building from TRCA's 5 Shoreham Drive site to the new site. A detail assessment of the portable building by TWC and TRCA staff has uncovered the presence of mould and potential structural issues. Given the age of the building and the cost to upgrade the building to comply with the current building code, it has been determined that moving the portable building is not a viable option. TWC and TRCA staff are currently reviewing other options for a temporary facility for TWC.

Menno-Reesor Restoration Project

In early 2019, TRCA staff commenced the following efforts to improve ecosystem health of the 27-hectare property. Site hydrology has been restored by removing existing tile drains and returning more natural surficial water flows through bioswales and wetlands. Hydrological and topographical improvements have created conditions that will allow for the increase of forest cover by planting approximately 43,000 trees and shrubs over the next two years. Planting communities will change throughout the site to represent the different forest communities commonly found throughout the Rouge National Urban Park natural heritage system. Habitat structures such as log tangles, boulder piles, hedgerows and bird boxes will also be installed throughout the site to create essential wildlife habitat opportunities. This includes increasing habitat for species at risk such as barn swallows and bats.

TRCA staff has also initiated works to bring the existing farmhouse and barn to a state-of-good-repair condition. A consultant has been retained to complete a comprehensive survey of designated substances within the farmhouse and barn to identify the level of remediation required. Once the survey has been completed, the abatement and demolition of the farmhouse and barn interior will be undertaken. These works will be followed by a structural assessment of the buildings, interior detailed design and subsequent renovation works.

Living City, the TRCA 2013-2022 Strategic Plan

This report supports the following strategy set forth in the TRCA 2013-2022 Strategic Plan:
Strategy 7 – Build partnerships and new business models

Report prepared by: Mike Fenning, extension 5223

Emails: mfenning@trca.on.ca

For Information contact: Mike Fenning, extension 5223

Emails: mfenning@trca.on.ca

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Attachments: 2