

Section I – Items for Board of Directors Action

TO: Chair and Members of the Executive Committee
Meeting #9/19, Friday, November 01, 2019

FROM: Michael Tolensky, Chief Financial and Operating Officer

RE: **BLACK CREEK COMMUNITY FARM**
Proposal to Lease 4929 Jane Street, City of Toronto, Humber River Watershed
(CFN 34397)

KEY ISSUE

Proposal from FoodShare Toronto to enter into a 5-year lease of Toronto and Region Conservation Authority-owned land for the purpose of operating the Black Creek Community Farm located south of Steeles Avenue and east of Jane Street, municipally known as 4929 Jane Street, in the City of Toronto, Humber River watershed.

RECOMMENDATION

THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS THAT WHEREAS Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) is in receipt of a request from FoodShare Toronto (FoodShare) to enter into a lease agreement for the continued operation of the Black Creek Community Farm (BCCF) located south of Steeles Avenue and east of Jane Street, municipally known as 4929 Jane Street, City of Toronto, Humber River watershed

WHEREAS the BCCF has been in operation at this site since 2012 with FoodShare being one of the founding/supporting partners;

WHEREAS the BCCF helps to accomplish TRCA's Strategic Plan objectives to Foster Sustainable Citizenship and to Rethink Greenspace to Maximize Value;

AND WHEREAS it is in the best interest of TRCA in furthering its objectives, as set out in Section 20 of the *Conservation Authorities Act*, to cooperate with FoodShare in this instance;

THEREFORE LET IT BE RESOLVED THAT TRCA enter into a lease with FoodShare for the use of 3.24 hectares (8 acres), more or less, improved with the Braeburn House and Barn, pavilion, greenhouses and wood burning oven, said land being Part of Lot 24-25, Concession 4, WYS, Township of York, municipally known as 4929 Jane Street, City of Toronto;

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

- (i) that the term of the lease be for 5 years;
- (ii) that consideration be \$18,000 per annum with an annual review subject to Consumer Price Index, plus HST;
- (iii) that FoodShare be responsible for all approvals required for the development, management and operation of the urban farm;
- (iv) any other terms and conditions deemed appropriate by the TRCA staff and solicitor;

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AND FURTHER 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.

BACKGROUND

Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) is in receipt of a request from FoodShare to enter into a lease agreement for the continued operation of the BCCF located south of Steeles Avenue and east of Jane Street, municipally known as 4929 Jane Street, City of Toronto, Humber River watershed.

The subject TRCA-owned lands were acquired from Central Mortgage and Housing Corp. on February 12, 1963, under the Black Creek Conservation Area project. The lands are located west of the main Black Creek Pioneer Village.

The concept of the Toronto Urban Farm at Black Creek Pioneer Village was developed in 2002. Shortly thereafter, TRCA requested support from the City of Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation Department to realize the concept. In 2004, TRCA and the City of Toronto formed a memorandum of management for eight acres of land located at the southeast corner of Jane Street and Steeles Avenue, in the City of Toronto. The City of Toronto was given management responsibility over this parcel of TRCA-owned land for the establishment of an organic urban farm. In 2006 the Braeburn House and Barn were included in the management agreement. Toronto Urban Farm was operated by the City of Toronto for seven years and in 2011 as part of the City of Toronto's 2012 operating budget process, City Council ended the funding for the Toronto Urban Farm. The eight-acre site was formally turned back to TRCA for future management on December 31, 2011.

As part of a search for a new urban agricultural partnership TRCA issued a Request for Proposal and was successful in entering into a 5-year rolling lease with Everdale Organic Farm and Environmental Learning Centre (Everdale), effective January 1, 2013. The rolling lease allows the tenant the right to request that the lease be extended by one year. Everdale had a strong 10-year track record of delivering organic farming at their Hillsburgh location and had a successful educational program related to farming and local food. Everdale was committed to working with various high profile organizations that would add value to the farm project, with FoodShare being one of the high profile organizations that offered programming to enhance community access to healthy local food.

Everdale was successful in developing the BCCF into a leading urban agriculture hub within the City of Toronto. However, during the 2017 and 2018 lease periods Everdale communicated to TRCA that they were encountering financial difficulties operating both farms and accordingly terminated their lease with TRCA effective October 31, 2018.

In an effort to keep the farm operational FoodShare approached Everdale and TRCA with an interest in taking over the lease for BCCF. FoodShare was one of the founding partners for BCCF, alongside other food and farming organizations. FoodShare played an active role at the farm, supporting the design and maintenance of various on-site operations, participated in the Business Plan development, has been a member of the farm's Steering Committee and collaborated on program delivery and evaluation. In 2016 FoodShare added BCCF to their trusteeship platform and supports the BCCF vision of becoming their own incorporated organization. In addition, FoodShare currently employs all BCCF employees.

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FoodShare currently operates the School Grown schoolyard farming project and is the most productive urban farm in the city. They generate annual sales of \$25,000 on 15,000 square feet of production space. Over the past five years FoodShare's small scale intensive farm has grossed in excess of \$95,000 in farm sales, created 142 jobs for youth and has grown over 30,000 lbs. of food. FoodShare supplies three full season farmers markets, 3-4 restaurants each season, wholesale orders, a school-level harvest share every fall, and school cafeteria lunches.

Lease Agreement

The area subject to this lease consists of approximately 3.24 hectares (8 acres) of land. The following are the key terms and conditions of the proposed lease arrangement:

1. Lease Payment: \$18,000 per annum together with an annual review subject to Consumer Price Index increase, plus HST;
2. Initial Term: 5 years;
3. Insurance: FoodShare will provide \$5 million in commercial general liability insurance;
4. Special Taxes and Utilities: FoodShare will be responsible for all applicable taxes and utilities;
5. Further Approvals: FoodShare will comply with any applicable laws, directions, rules and regulations;

RATIONALE

Entering into a lease agreement with FoodShare would allow for the continued operation of the BCCF. This arrangement would continue to prompt social equity, health and food security in the Jane and Finch community by providing opportunities for increased accessibility to fresh, healthy and affordable foods. It will continue to create jobs and meaningful work for the local community; provide education, skill development, training and leadership opportunities. It will continue to build connections between the community and TRCA programs and facilities.

Relationship to Building the Living City, the TRCA 2013-2022 Strategic Plan

This report supports the following strategies set forth in the TRCA 2013-2022 Strategic Plan:

Strategy 3 – Rethink greenspace to maximize its value

Strategy 5 – Foster sustainable citizenship

Strategy 7 – Build partnerships and new business models

FINANCIAL DETAILS

The \$18,000/year in revenues generated from this lease will be used to offset costs for TRCA in managing TRCA lands and assets.

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Date: October 2, 2019

Attachments: 2

Attachment 1: Site Plan

Attachment 2: Orthophoto