

Section III – Items for the Information of the Board

TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Directors
Meeting #5/20, Friday, June 26, 2020

FROM: Michael Tolensky, Chief Financial and Operating Officer

RE: **BRUCE’S MILL CONSERVATION AREA**
Repair, Restoration and Adapted Re-use of the Grist Mill at Bruce’s Mill
Conservation Area

KEY ISSUE

To provide an update regarding the potential repair, restoration and adaptive re-use of the Grist Mill building at Bruce’s Mill Conservation Area.

RECOMMENDATION

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT the information report regarding the repair, restoration and adaptive re-use of the Grist Mill be received.

BACKGROUND

General Background

Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) operates Bruce’s Mill Conservation Area. Included on this 108 ha. site is a house, a Grist Mill, and dam which historically operated but currently is not being utilized. The house was relocated to the entrance of the site and remains part of the TRCA rental portfolio. The Grist Mill structure contains a 160-year-old post and beam building of timber frame construction with wood clapboard cladding, on a fieldstone foundation. The building has an approximate internal area of 4,458 sq. ft. across 3 floors with a basement of approximately 440 sq. ft. The dam has been lowered and it is no longer possible to operate the mill under waterpower. The building remains vacant and the entire building is showing signs of deterioration, particularly wood decay and peeling paint.

Expression of Interest

The Grist Mill is in a poor building state condition. The latest building condition assessment report (2008) reflects the total capital cost of remediation to be \$405,750 (2008 dollars). As reflected in the Bruce’s Mill Conservation Area Master Plan (2011) TRCA recognizes the potential for this building to be integrated into park planning and redevelopment.

On September 23, 2019 an Expression of Interest (EOI) for the repair, restoration and adaptive re-use of the Grist Mill Building at Bruce’s Mill Conservation Area was issued, to solicit interest from parties with the creativity, expertise and potential financial capacity to partner with TRCA, to preserve the building for community use.

The EOI process resulted in only one response being received by TRCA from ERA Architects Inc. After review of the Response, a meeting with a representative of ERA Architects took place in late December 2019. During the discussion it was determined that before any work be considered for the Grist Mill, that emphasis be placed on determining a user/operator for the building. Without a user/operator, it would not be considered financially responsible to undertake a restoration for a building to continue to sit vacant.

Item 8.4

Private Developer Interest

Staff has been approached by a private developer who is proposing a redevelopment of the Grist Mill site to a mixed restaurant/event space. The proposal requires substantial capital investment by the TRCA or a partner and, similar to the ERA Architect Proposal, no long-term user/operator is proposed. The proposal will require substantial building additions and upgrades along with a long-term lease agreement in order for it to be viable and to maximize the potential for successful adaptive re-use.

Any redevelopment will likely require the relocation of the Grist Mill and or mitigation measures as it is subject to flooding in weather events exceeding a 5-year storm. Additionally, redevelopment of the site will require an increase in servicing of the building site, as there are no utilities or water/sewer services. The extent and possibilities of a renovation is conditional on the extent of heritage designation protections that are required which are currently being determined through settlement negotiations between the Town and TRCA.

Attachment 1 is a sketch illustrating the location of the subject lands. Attachment 2 is an orthophoto illustrating the location of the subject lands. Attachment 3 is an aerial photo of the Grist Mill.

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 6 – Tell the story of the Toronto region

Strategy 7 – Build partnerships and new business models

DETAILS OF WORK TO BE DONE

Staff will continue conversations with potential developers/operators for partnership opportunities for restoring the Grist Mill for community use. Staff will also continue to flag the capital costs with York Region and the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville and pursue applicable grant opportunities.

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Attachments: 3