

Section I – Items for Board of Directors Action

TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Directors
Meeting #8/20, Friday, November 20, 2020

FROM: Michael Tolensky, Chief Financial and Operating Officer

RE: **THE MEADOWAY PROJECT – PHASE 1 UPDATE AND TENDER FOR CONSTRUCTION OF HIGHLAND CREEK TRAIL**

KEY ISSUE

Update to the Board of Directors regarding Phase 1 of The Meadoway Project and request for delegated authority to the Chief Executive Officer to award any required general contractor services for construction of the Highland Creek trail.

RECOMMENDATION

WHEREAS no meetings of the Executive Committee and Board of Directors are scheduled for December 2020;

AND WHEREAS Resolution #A184/19, adopted at the October 25, 2019 Board of Directors meeting previously delegated the approval of all time sensitive procurements for the December 2020 period to the Chief Executive Officer or his designate;

AND WHEREAS the Weston Family Foundation, as the primary funder of The Meadoway project has advised Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) to proceed with the tender of the Highland Creek trail construction and has committed to funding this deliverable, should the tender results be deemed acceptable;

THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED THAT the 2020 update for Phase 1 of The Meadoway Project be received;

THAT, subject to the approval of funding from the Weston Family Foundation, the Chief Executive Officer be delegated authority to award any contracts plus an appropriate contingency, required to move forward with the construction of the Highland Creek trail, if staff is unable to report to the Board of Directors as per TRCA Procurement Policy due to timing constraints;

THAT should TRCA staff be unable to negotiate a contract with the successful Proponent, staff be authorized to enter into and conclude contract negotiations with other Proponents that submitted quotations, beginning with the next lowest bid meeting TRCA specifications;

THAT authorized TRCA officials be directed to take whatever action may be required to implement the contract, including the obtaining of necessary approvals and the signing and execution of any documents;

THAT staff report back on the contract award to the Board of Directors meeting;

AND FURTHER THAT updates be brought back to the Board of Directors on an annual basis as implementation of the project proceeds.

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BACKGROUND

Led by TRCA, in partnership with Toronto and Region Conservation Foundation, City of Toronto, Hydro One, and the Weston Family Foundation, The Meadoway Project will transform 16 kilometres of hydro corridor in Scarborough into one of the largest urban linear greenspaces in Canada.

On April 11, 2018, Mayor John Tory along with the Directors of the Weston Family Foundation, and representatives from TRCA and Toronto and Region Conservation Foundation jointly announced the launch of The Meadoway at a ceremony in Scarborough. As part of this announcement, the Weston Family Foundation pledged up to \$25 million in support of the project, with a firm commitment of \$10 million available immediately to support Phase 1 of the project. The City of Toronto committed \$6.3 million to realize the shared vision for The Meadoway by supporting the multi-use trail infrastructure, and to support the City's ongoing operations and maintenance activities in the hydro corridor.

At Authority Meeting #7/18, held on September 28, 2018, an update on The Meadoway and recommendation to advance implementation of key priorities was approved per Resolution #A143/18, in part, as follows:

WHEREAS The W. Garfield Weston Foundation has made a \$10 million of the \$25 million pledge available immediately to TRCA to implement Phase 1 of the project; ...

THEREFORE LET IT BE RESOLVED THAT with appropriate Board Authority approvals including purchasing approvals, authorized TRCA and LCF officials be directed to take all necessary actions regarding retaining consulting services, the hiring of contract staff including project managers, and the signing and execution of any service agreements within the limit of the confirmed approved funding agreement for Phase 1; ...

THAT updates be brought back to the Authority on an annual basis as implementation of the project proceeds.

A budget spanning from 2018-2020 was prepared to support the following key objectives in Phase 1:

- *Education and Community Learning* - Undertaking of engagement and education programs that facilitate opportunities for the community to help implement The Meadoway and utilize this new connection between downtown Toronto and Rouge National Urban Park;
- *Public Relations and Communications* - Undertaking of communications and public relations programs that will effectively position The Meadoway as a world class opportunity for greenspace revitalization;
- *Meadow Revitalization* - Completion of an additional 40 ha of meadow habitat and the continued monitoring and maintenance of 80 ha of habitat in the Meadoway; and
- *Active Transportation and Connections* - Completion of the necessary technical analysis, planning, permitting, and design to provide for a connected 16 km active transportation network across The Meadoway along with beginning implementation for incomplete sections of the trail.

At Board of Directors meeting #10/19 a status report was brought forward, and a presentation was made on The Meadoway project. With 2020 being the end of the Phase 1 funding, TRCA is

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preparing to wrap up their deliverables and has begun discussions with the Weston Family Foundation on Phase 2.

One of the key deliverables of Phase 1 was the planning and design of the multi-use trail which will run the full 16 km of The Meadoway. The conceptual alignments for the multi-use trail were evaluated through a Municipal Engineers Class Environmental Assessment (Schedule C), which received approval by the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) in January of 2020. In support of the project's active transportation and connections objective, implementation of one of the exiting trail gaps at Highland Creek (Section 5) was included in the Phase 1 budget and deliverables (see Attachment 1). It was always known by both the Weston Family Foundation and TRCA that this work would extend beyond 2020 given the timelines for the Environmental Assessment, detailed design and Hydro One Network approvals. The Highland Creek trail gap spans 1.8 km between Ellesmere Road and Orton Park Road to the west and Neilson Road to the east. It includes a bridge crossing over the Highland Creek and a boardwalk over a wetland on the east side of the river. It also will connect with the Upper Highland Pan Am Path which is currently under construction and when complete will allow users to travel south to the Lake Ontario waterfront.

The Weston Family Foundation has approved the carry forward of \$3.8M into 2021 to support the implementation of the Highland Creek trail connection. In order to continue progress on this deliverable, staff are looking to finalize the tender award by the end of 2020 so work can begin immediately in 2021.

In addition to the carry forward of the funding for the Highland Creek trail connection, the Weston Family Foundation has approved in principle \$1.348M in bridge funding for 2021 to allow for meadow restoration and to continue general project management while TRCA continues to seek leverage funding. Education, engagement and communications efforts will be scaled back and suspended during this transition. Terms of the agreement for the bridge funding are currently being discussed.

RATIONALE

This Report serves as an update to The Meadoway 2020 Phase 1 works and is organized by each of the four major objective areas outlined above. Additional details are included on the active transportation objective pertaining to the Highland Creek trail construction.

Education and Community Learning

Education

TRCA is leading education and community learning initiatives for The Meadoway. In The Meadoway's three-phase, curriculum-linked schools program, students grow native plants in their classrooms, take part in an in-school interactive learning experience, and take class field trips to The Meadoway to support restoration and stewardship activities.

In 2020, given the COVID-19 global pandemic, The Meadoway Schools Program has pivoted to provide a curriculum linked e-learning resource for teachers to engage their students through online platforms like Google Classroom. Teachers throughout The Meadoway corridor have also been sent grow kits so that they can grow native plants that will be transplanted into local backyards and balconies.

Details about The Meadoway Schools Program from January 1, 2020 to November 1, 2020 are provided below:

- 82 classes from 14 schools participated in The Meadoway Schools Program.

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- 68 grow kits were delivered and used by participating teachers.
- 1777 students participated in The Meadoway Schools Program, including 476 students who participated in face-to-face school presentations prior to March 13, 2020.
- Development of a virtual presentation for English as a Second Language (ESL) and Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) students using Zoom with 169 participants.

Community Learning

TRCAs Community Learning team hosts a variety of public events throughout The Meadoway including nature hikes, citizen science programs and other interpretive events throughout the year. Public talks about The Meadoway are regularly delivered to a variety of audiences. Group visits to The Meadoway to see the project in action are also coordinated. Given the COVID-19 global pandemic, Community Learning initiatives related to The Meadoway have pivoted to become virtual. This includes hosting virtual webinars, producing pre-recorded videos, leading Facebook Live sessions, and engaging with the public through interactive content via Instagram.

Details about Community Learning initiatives from January 1, 2020 to November 1, 2020 in The Meadoway are provided below:

- The Meadoway's first winter snowshoe event was hosted on February 22, 2020.
- 296 participants were engaged through face-to-face post-secondary talks and online webinars targeting a variety of audiences.
- Six educational live and pre-recorded videos were produced and posted with over 5000 views on Facebook.
- Educational and interactive content was shared through TRCA's #AtHomeWithNature Instagram Stories.

Public Relations and Communications

With the new addition of a Meadoway Manager of Communications, a comprehensive 2020 communications strategy was delivered and approved by the end of 2019. Highlights between January 1, 2020 and November 1, 2020 include:

- With the substantial shift to digital content in mid-March due to COVID-19, the communications strategy was amended to reflect the increase in online engagement.
- The "model home" concept targeting Section 4 or the Scarborough Centre Butterfly Trail (SCBT) was launched. *Visit a completed section of The Meadoway and see what's to come* – is the concept behind the term "the model home". Updated signage and trail painting with The Meadoway logo and colour palette are now complete.
- Social media: a daily commitment to content, brand awareness, education, stakeholder relations and storytelling. Digital content has substantially increased since mid-March with the introduction of a weekly TRCA Facebook live, Instagram engagement, new blog called *The Warbler*, and a What's Happening NOW feature on the website.
- Public relations agency for a pop-up event and social media campaign. Background information was collected but due to COVID-19 a decision was made to pause the work and reassess in December 2020.
- Creating regular quality content for the subscriber list (core audience), from newsletters to exclusive content to announcements.

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A complete audit of the website was executed in 2020. The Meadoway website went through a series of changes during the first half of the year with the addition of new content such as the completed visualization toolkit, a new blog, updated menu buttons and more.

- Substantial reorganization of the home page to maximize renderings and videos from the visualization toolkit.
- New menu buttons added to allow for a better user experience with additional content such as updated restoration information.
- The Meadoway Schools Program page was reworked, and a photo gallery was added to the community engagement page.
- FAQ's, maps, content and images were all updated.
- A new Meadoway blog called The Warbler was launched in March and is updated every two weeks with new content. This includes guest bloggers which assists with stakeholder relations and brand awareness.
- A public access map was added to help users find access points to phase one – SCBT.

The Meadoway social media channels are now running at full capacity. With COVID-19, a major shift to online content/engagement began in mid-March.

- Analytics show dramatic increase in engagement and followers from February to June.
- Subscriber list content is generated several times a month including newsletters, storytelling, and announcements.
- The Meadoway began TRCA Facebook Lives and Instagram weekly polls/questions at the end of March.
- An editorial calendar is created each month for social media with strategic storytelling tailored to each of The Meadoway's three channels.
- A considerable effort is spent on photo management and the curation and organizing of images.

After a comprehensive, year-long process, the Visualization Toolkit (VTK) was launched in February 2020. TRCA, Perkins+Will and Future Landscapes Design won a national award of excellence from the Canadian Society of Landscape Design for the VTK.

- A comprehensive communication strategy was designed to launch the VTK.
- Front-page story on blogTO.
- New QR codes on The Meadoway signs that link directly to the VTK.
- The content is also being used in staff presentations to stakeholders, partner organizations and in public webinars.

Meadow Revitalization

Meadow restoration and adaptive management continues to occur across The Meadoway. As meadow restoration can take up to five years, from seed to full establishment, each section of The Meadoway requires different restoration techniques and processes based on the progress and timing of the meadow. Due to COVID-19, all restoration staff adhered to the policies and regulations including social distancing while working in the field. The following has been completed between January 1, 2020 and November 1, 2020 (see attachment 1 for reference to the location of each project section):

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Section 1.1-1.3

- Meadow seed mix areas delineated with flagging.
- Cleared woody debris from meadow footprint and fence line.
- Garbage removal from meadow footprint and fence lines.
- Informational signage revised to reflect project status.
- Spring blanket spray herbicide treatments prior to seeding native meadow species, suppressing non-native species.
- Multiple buffer mowing and trimming around meadow footprint and fence line.
- Continuous Invasive species management of Dog-strangling Vine, Canada Thistle, Garlic Mustard, Manitoba Maple and other non-native woody species.
- Meadow footprint (12ha) seeded with updated native species mixes (resilient, grass, wet meadow, butterfly, and short meadow mixes).
- Implemented pilot studies and monitoring plots to assess native seeding in alternative seasons as well as cover crop densities and types (oats vs. millet).
- Soil samples collected for glyphosate degradation analysis.
- Annual terrestrial monitoring of flora plots, bird and butterfly transects (Spring, Summer and Fall observations).

Section 1.4 and 2

- Meadow seed mix areas delineated with flagging.
- Cleared woody debris from meadow footprint and fence line.
- Garbage removal from meadow footprint and fence lines.
- Informational signage revised to reflect project status.
- Four rounds of site preparation (mow, till, seed with cover crop, harrow) on 21ha in preparation for fall seeding.
- Multiple buffer mowing and trimming around meadow footprint and fence line.
- Continuous Invasive species management of Dog-strangling Vine.
- Organic herbicide pilot study plots installed and monitored effectiveness complete.
- Meadow footprint (21ha) seeded with updated native species mixes in Fall (resilient, grass, wet meadow, butterfly, and short meadow mixes).

Section 4

- Garbage removal from meadow footprint and fence lines.
- Spring Maintenance mow on specific areas.
- Multiple buffer mowing and trimming around meadow footprint and fence line.
- Informational signage updated and repaired as needed.
- Adaptive management for invasive species of Dog-strangling Vine, Canada Thistle, Manitoba Maple, Black Locust and other non-native woody species.
- Native species overseeding in past invasive species locations.
- UoT Infiltration study by graduate student.
- Meadow species diversity enhancement trials (mowing, light tilling, overseeding in parts of section 4).
- Annual terrestrial monitoring of flora plots, bird and butterfly transects (Spring, Summer and Fall observations).
- QR code stickers applied to meadow restoration signs.

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Section 7

- Garbage removal from meadow footprint and fence lines.
- Spring/Fall Maintenance mow on specific areas.
- Adaptive management for invasive species of Dog-strangling Vine, Canada Thistle, Manitoba Maple, Black Locust and other non-native woody species.
- Invasive species management of Dog-strangling Vine, Canada Thistle, Garlic Mustard Manitoba Maple, Spotted Knapweed, Black Locust and other non-native woody species.
- Native species overseeding in past invasive species locations.
- Multiple buffer mowing and trimming around meadow footprint and fence line
- UoT Infiltration study by graduate student.
- Annual terrestrial monitoring of flora plots, bird and butterfly transects (Spring, Summer and Fall observations).
- Informational signage revised to reflect project status.
- Meadow footprint seeded with updated native species mix (butterfly mix) in Spring (Section 7.2).

Monitoring

First round of bird transects were completed in Sections 1, 4, and 7 of The Meadoway. Meadow birds were monitored twice during the field season with the first visit occurring between May 15th and May 30th, and the second visit between May 30th and June 15th, with at least 10 days between visits. Counts were conducted between 05:00 and 10:00 hours and at approximately the same time of day on subsequent visits from year to year. Counts were only conducted in good weather conditions (no rain, light winds). All birds seen or heard within a 100 m radius circle and during a 10-minute time period were recorded.

Research

There are a variety of investigative projects underway in The Meadoway, including bee monitoring and a partnership with the University of Toronto to examine the hydraulic improvement brought on by meadow restoration. The goal of the hydraulic research is to track and predict the performance of The Meadoway's flood control capacity under various climate scenarios and better understand the soil characteristics in the hydro corridor in both the restored meadow and the turfgrass. The physical, chemical and biological parameters of the soil will be examined in the lab with the results due in late fall.

Active Transportation and Connections

After receiving Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks approval in January 2020 for the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment, the Project has moved into the detailed design phase.

The following technical items have been advanced during January 1, 2020 to November 1, 2020 in support of active transportation and connections:

- Complete detailed design package for Phase 1 of Section 5 – Highland Creek;
- Complete authorization packages for Hydro One networks to allow for the licensing of Section 5 to the City of Toronto and facilitate implementation;
- Request for Tender for implementation of Phase 1 of Section 5 – Highland Creek prepared and ready for release;
- Stage 2 archaeology investigation workplan complete and work to be undertaken in November in support of Section 5 – Highland Creek;

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- Electromagnetic frequency field study consultant retained and work to commence in mid-November for Section 5 – Highland Creek, in support of the City of Toronto’s Prudent Avoidance Strategy for public realm near or within hydro corridors;
- Completion of 60% level of design for Section 3 – Givendale (Phase 1) – 100% will be completed by the end of the year;
- Submission of Section 3 – Givendale (Phase 1) 60% package for Hydro One Inc. technical review and approval – 100% will be completed by the end of the year; and
- Development of 60% level of design for Section 6 – Morningside (Phase 1) – 100% will be completed by the end of the year.

Construction of Highland Creek Trail – Section 5

Construction of the Highland Creek trail was included as a deliverable in Phase 1. With the timelines for planning, design and permits it was always known that this deliverable would be extended beyond the 2018-2020 Phase 1 timeline. With detailed design now wrapping up and approvals from Hydro One Networks being imminent, TRCA is now prepared to proceed with the release of the tender. The scope of work for the tender will include, but is not necessarily limited to, the supply of all labour, material, supervision and equipment necessary to implement the Highland Creek trail as per the detailed design drawing set prepared by Dillon Consulting Ltd. The detailed design for the Project consists of but is not necessarily limited to the following general components:

- Site clearing, grubbing, removal and off-site haulage and disposal of approximately 25-30 trees;
- Installation of perimeter safety fence, construction signage, erosion and sediment controls and tree protection as required for approximately 1.8 km of trail;
- Installation, maintenance and removal of temporary access roads, storage and staging areas;
- Site grading, cut/fill, haulage and off-site disposal of surplus excavated material;
- Installation and removal of a temporary bridge for crossing of the Highland Creek to facilitate installation of the permanent bridge and trail construction including temporary lighting and navigation signage if required;
- Design/build of one 36.6 metre span, 6-metre-wide permanent bridge crossing over the Highland Creek including foundations and concrete abutments;
- Design/build of a 62 linear metre boardwalk on helical piles through a section of a Provincially Significant Wetland feature;
- Geotechnical investigations for armourstone retaining walls to facilitate design including global stability analysis;
- Installation of mechanically stabilized earth (MSE) walls
- Design/build for grounding system for installation of trail amenities within the existing Hydro corridor;
- Installation of granular base and asphalt paving of 1.1 km of trail including resting nodes, signage and line painting; and
- Site restoration including; fine grading, topsoil, seeding and plantings as required.

A Request for Pre-Qualification (RFPQ) for general contractors was publicly advertised on the public procurement website www.biddingo.com on July 23rd, 2020 and closed on August 6th, 2020. Pending approvals from Hydro One Networks on the detailed design package sent to them for comment/approval on April 28, 2020, TRCA is targeting release of the tender to all pre-qualified contractors in mid-November with results available in early December.

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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 4 – Create complete communities that integrate nature and the built environment

Strategy 5 – Foster sustainable citizenship

Strategy 12 – Facilitate a region-wide approach to sustainability

FINANCIAL DETAILS

Based on deliverable refinements, a revised budget of \$38.175M for 2018 – 2025 has been estimated for the overall project. \$10M was secured from the Weston Family Foundation for Phase 1, with an additional \$15M pledged which was contingent on TRCA raising matching funding making the gap in funding currently \$13.175M. Because leverage funding has not been secured to date, the Weston Family Foundation is not in a position to release the \$15M pledged. However, in order to allow for continued progress on the project, they have approved in principal \$1.348M in bridge funding for 2021 to continue to advance meadow restoration and overall project management/coordination. Education, engagement and communications efforts will be suspended or scaled back during this transition. In addition to this, \$3.8M for the Highland Creek Trail connection and \$584,540 of consolidated unspent funds will be carried over into 2021 from the Phase 1 budget. This brings the total budget supported by the Weston Family Foundation for 2021 to \$5,732,580. Terms for an agreement for the new funding of \$1.348M in 2021 is currently being discussed. It is understood that this will be considered part of the \$15M pledge.

Funds for The Meadoway project are being tracked in account series: 260-01.

DETAILS OF WORK TO BE DONE

TRCA will continue to work with the City of Toronto to seek opportunities for provincial and federal investment in The Meadoway in order to potentially release the \$15M pledged by the Weston Family Foundation. Also, a text to donate campaign has been initiated. The following is an overview of key deliverables for 2021 which have been approved by the Weston Family Foundation, based on the Phase 1 carry over of funds and the additional bridge funding:

- Construction of the Highland Creek trail connection (1.8 km). This includes a bridge over the Highland Creek and a boardwalk over the wetland on the east side of the ravine;
- Restoration management (based on current stage of revitalization) of 104.69 ha of meadow habitat;
- 20.76 ha new meadow established;
- Ongoing stakeholder management and addressing public inquiries;
- Preparation of funding requests to all levels of government; and
- General communications including updates to website (as needed); bi-monthly (or around key events) newsletter release via subscriber list (total six per year); and social media – one post to all platforms per week; one Instagram story per month (total 12).

Report prepared by: Lisa Turnbull, extension 5645 and Corey Wells, extension 5233

Emails: lisa.turnbull@trca.ca; corey.wells@trca.ca

For Information contact: Lisa Turnbull, extension 5645

Emails: lisa.turnbull@trca.ca

Date: October 29, 2020

Attachments: 1

Attachment 1: The Meadoway - Highland Creek Trail