

CITY OF VAUGHAN

EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 25, 2012

Item 18, Report No. 33, of the Committee of the Whole, which was adopted, as amended, by the Council of the City of Vaughan on September 25, 2012, as follows:

By approving the following in accordance with Communication C12, from the Commissioner of Planning, dated September 25, 2012:

“The draft Terms of Reference for the undertaking of Phases 2, 3 and 4 of the Natural Heritage Network Study, forming Attachment 1 to this report and revised following the Committee of the Whole meeting of September 5, 2012, be approved and that staff be authorized to issue a Request for Proposal for the retention of the consulting services specified in the draft Terms of Reference.”.

**18 IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES: VAUGHAN OFFICIAL PLAN 2010
APPROVAL OF TERMS OF REFERENCE AND AUTHORIZATION TO ISSUE RFP
NATURAL HERITAGE NETWORK STUDY PHASES 2, 3 AND 4
FILE 25.1**

The Committee of the Whole recommends:

- 1) That the recommendation contained in the following report of the Commissioner of Planning, dated September 4, 2012, be approved;**
- 2) That the following motion be referred to staff for review, and suggested wording as appropriate be provided to the Council meeting of September 25, 2012:**

“That in undertaking Phases 2, 3, and 4 of the Natural Heritage Study, consultants be guided by the following Council priorities:

- 1. Council’s ability to accommodate new or expanded infrastructure within the Natural Heritage Network;**
 - 2. The inclusion of publicly owned lands taking precedence over privately held lands as enhancement areas within the Natural Heritage Network; and**
 - 3. Any review of the greenbelt by the City taking consideration of growth needs of the City.”; and**
- 3) That Communication C9, from the Commissioner of Engineering and Public Works, dated August 29, 2012, be received.**

Recommendation

The Commissioner of Planning recommends that:

The draft Terms of Reference for the undertaking Phases 2, 3 and 4 of the Natural Heritage Network Study, forming Attachment 1 to this report be approved and that staff be authorized to issue a Request for Proposal for the retention of the consulting services specified in the draft Terms of Reference.

Contribution to Sustainability

Goal 2 of *Green Directions Vaughan*, the City’s Community Sustainability and Environmental Master Plan, focuses on the new Official Plan to “ensure sustainable development and redevelopment”. The description of Goal 2 explains the transformative vision for the new Official Plan.

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Vaughan is committed to sustainable land use. Vaughan Tomorrow, our consolidated Growth Management Strategy – 2031, has a central focus on creating a cutting-edge Official Plan that will provide for increased land use densities, efficient public transit, considerations for employment lands and open space systems, as well as walkable, human scale neighbourhoods that include services, retail, and an attractive public realm. The plan will guide the creation of the physical form that will reflect a “complete” community.

In regard to the Natural Heritage Network Study Action 2.2.4 provides for the City to:

Develop a comprehensive Natural Heritage Strategy that examines the City's natural capital and diversity and how best to enhance and connect it. As part of this action:

- Develop an inventory of Vaughan's natural heritage, and identify opportunities for habitat restoration;
- Ensure that policies in the City's new Official Plan protect all ecological features and functions as per current provincial and regional policies, and also include consideration for locally significant natural features and functions.

Economic Impact

Funding for undertaking the Natural Heritage Network Study was included in the 2011 Capital Budget (PL-9025-11) on the basis of a two part allocation. Phase 1 was treated as a stand alone project and was funded in the amount of \$52,400. Phase 1 is now nearing completion. In the 2012 Capital budget, the funding for Phases 2, 3, and 4 was approved at \$199,700. The total budget for the preparation of the Natural Heritage Network Study is \$252,100.

Communications Plan

A communication plan in respect of this report is not required. A communications and public consultation plan will be prepared as part of the process of conducting Phases 2-4 of the Natural Heritage Network Study.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to obtain approval of a draft Terms of Reference and authorization to issue a Request for Proposals to retain consulting services to undertake Phases 2, 3 and 4 of the Natural Heritage Network Study.

Background – Analysis and Options

a) Location

Phases 2, 3 and 4 of the Natural Heritage Network Study apply to the entire City, with the focus being on the areas not subject to an urban designation under the current Official Plan.

b) Vaughan Official Plan 2010

The Vaughan Official Plan 2010 was adopted by Council on September 7, 2010 and was subject to further modifications on September 27, 2011, March 20, 2012 and April 17, 2012. The following policy was added to VOP 2010 on September 27, 2011:

“10.1.1.2 That in order to achieve orderly, managed growth and development, the preparation of the New Community Area Secondary Plan will only proceed:

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- a) After five of the required secondary plans identified under the heading “Required Secondary Plan Areas” on Schedule 14-A, “Areas Subject to Secondary Plans” have been substantially advanced (meaning that the secondary plans have proceeded to a statutory public hearing under the *Planning Act*); and
- b) **The Natural Heritage Network Study has been completed.”**

On June 19, 2012 Regional staff presented the results of the Ground Related Housing Demand/Supply Analysis to Vaughan Committee of the Whole. This resulted in an amendment being directed to Policy 10.1.1.2 as it applies to Natural Heritage Network Study. On June 26, 2012, in consideration of the presentation, Council adopted (in part) the following:

“ . . . Section 10.1.1.2 be amended in the Vaughan 2010 OP precluding the initiation of new Community Secondary Plans within ROPA 2, until two of the identified Secondary Plans and the **Natural Heritage Network Study** are **substantially completed**. For the purposes of Secondary Plans identified on Schedule 14-A, **substantial completion means** a Statutory Public Hearing has been held pursuant to the Planning Act. **For the purposes of the Natural Heritage Network Study, substantial completion means the submission by landowners within the ROPA 2 of information in a format and at a level of detail consistent with TRCA, York Region and city of Vaughan policies inclusive of a report to Committee of the Whole and Council on the findings of Phase 1 and Council approval of terms of reference for phases 2-4”**

This modification was supported by Regional Council on June 28, 2012. Section 10.1.1.2 will be revised to reflect this direction.

- c) Status of Phase 1 and Transition into Phases 2, 3 and 4 of the Natural Heritage Network Study

The Natural Heritage Network Study (Phase 1) commenced in the second quarter of 2012. The completion of Phase 1, with a report to Council, is projected for November 2012 with a report to Council in December. In order for Phase 1 to proceed without delay into Phases 2-4, it will be necessary for the consulting team to be in place before the end of the year. It will require several months lead time to conduct the procurement process to meet this objective. Therefore, staff is seeking direction to proceed with issuing a Request for Proposals on the basis of the draft terms of reference recommended in this report. This will allow October – November to complete the recruitment cycle.

Approval of this draft terms of reference will fulfill one of the “substantial completion” requirements for the Natural Heritage Network Study, as set out in the revised Policy 10.1.1.2., for proceeding with the New Community Areas secondary plan. The December 2012 report to Council on Phase 1 would fulfill the second requirement for substantial completion. With regard to the third requirement, the timing of the environmental submission by the landowners has not been determined at this time. Receipt of the landowners’ environmental submission in a format and at a level of detail consistent with the policies of the TRCA, the City and the Region, will fulfill this requirement of the new Policy 10.1.1.2. Confirmation needs to be obtained from the ROPA 2 (New Community Areas) proponents as to when it would be available.

This report is seeking direction to proceed with the retention of a consultant to undertake Phases 2, 3 and 4 of the study. Completion of these phases is anticipated in the first quarter of 2014. Adoption of this report will assist in providing for a seamless transition between Phase 1 and Phases 2, 3 and 4 of the Natural Heritage Network Study.

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d) Terms of Reference for the Phases 2, 3 and 4 of the Natural Heritage Network Study

Background to the Preparation of the Natural Heritage Network Study

The NHN Study continues the initial effort documented in the report, Natural Heritage in the City, prepared as a background report to the Vaughan Official Plan and which was brought forward to Council on June 1, 2010. The NHN Study will assess the role of the existing NHN in maintaining elements of biodiversity and ecological functions for the long term, and propose additional NHN areas for future securement options to meet biodiversity and ecosystem function targets consistent with Section 2.1.2 of the Provincial Policy Statement.

There are three main objectives of the overall NHN Study:

1. An assessment of the biodiversity contribution and ecological functions of the existing NHN;
2. Developing a GIS database of the NHN, its constituent parts, and relevant attribute information to provide a clear and transparent rationale for the NHN, which can be used in the development application process; and
3. Prepare a strategy to enhance the NHN to meet select ecosystem targets.

In addition, there are critical initiatives emphasizing the need for the NHN Study, including: (1) regulations under the Endangered Species Act (2007) to protect endangered Redside Dace habitat; (2) potential impacts of the GTA West Corridor on remaining natural habitat primarily in the Greenbelt Plan area; (3) the Official Plan requirement to complete one comprehensive and coordinated Secondary Plan for New Community Areas; and (4) the 2015 Greenbelt Plan review. The NHN Study is an objective, scientific exercise that will inform policy (e.g. for Secondary Plans for New Community Areas) and assist in meeting conformity requirements to over-arching policies and legislation.

The scope of the overall NHN study has 4 phases of work. The first phase augments the existing NHN by compiling all appropriate information into a comprehensive GIS database. Other key aspects of Phase 1 are to set ecosystem targets to complete the NHN and compare the existing NHN against the targets to understand the gaps in the system. Phase 2 of the study includes the field investigations according to existing protocols: the *Significant Wildlife Habitat Technical Guide* (MNR 2000) and; the *Evaluation, Classification and Management of Headwater Drainage Features: Interim Guidelines* (TRCA 2009). Phase 3 summarizes the work of the first two phases into a report format. Phase 4 considers a range of land securement approaches from acquisition to stewardship options.

Status of Phase 1 of the Natural Heritage Network Study

On December 13, 2011, Council directed that a Request for Proposals be issued to undertake Phase 1 of the NHN Study. Terms of Reference RFP 12-020 was issued on January 27, 2012 and seven submissions were received by closing on February 16, 2012. On April 10th, 2012, the Director of Policy Planning provided a letter to the Director of Purchasing Services recommending that RFP 12-020 be awarded to North-South Environmental Inc. to carry out Phase 1 of the NHN Study.

The Consultants are working towards a draft final report to be submitted for October 2012. One Public Consultation Meeting was held on June 28th, 2012 and attended by over 30 people. A second Public Consultation Meeting will be scheduled for late September or early October 2012. Staff is working towards a December 4th, 2012 Committee of the Whole (Working Session) report and presentation on the findings of Phase 1 of the NHN Study.

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Overview of the Terms of Reference for Phases 2, 3 and 4

Phase 1 of the NHN Study sets the foundation for the overall Study by undertaking a systems-based approach to natural heritage planning and by providing two key deliverables: (a) compiling all appropriate information into a comprehensive GIS database; and (b) identifying ecosystem targets to complete the NHN.

Field investigations are the focus of Phase 2 of the NHN Study and constitute a major component of the overall Study. Significant wildlife habitat and headwater drainage features are the two main gaps in the existing NHN in relation to natural heritage system planning according to the Provincial Policy Statement. Hence, these areas should be the focus of research and field investigations in Phase 2, although Phase 1 findings may result in the identification of other priority geographic or thematic areas for attention during Phase 2.

The purpose of Phase 3 is to integrate the results of system planning and target setting (Phase 1) with the findings from the field investigations (Phase 2) into a comprehensive report. This will include verifying or modifying criteria and targets identified in Phase 1 through appropriate rationale and justification. The comprehensive report will also include the securement strategy developed in Phase 4. The securement strategy emphasizes long-term securement of the NHN through a variety of appropriate approaches, including land acquisition, conservation easements, and other land owner stewardship agreements.

A public consultation process is also integrated into the Phases 2 to 4 work plan. The need for ongoing public consultation was reconfirmed in Phase 1.

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2020

The actions recommended in this report are consistent with the Vaughan Vision objectives to: Plan and Manage Growth and Economic Vitality; and to Lead and Support Environmental Sustainability.

Regional Implications

The Region of York will continue to be consulted during Phases 2, 3 and 4 of the Natural Heritage Network Study. The Region is currently represented on the Phase 1 steering committee and their on-going participation is anticipated.

Conclusion

Phase 1 of the Natural Heritage Network Study is well underway and it is expected that staff will be reporting the results of this phase to Council in December of this year. The entire Natural Heritage Network Study has been budgeted and it is the intent that Phases 2, 3 and 4 proceed sequentially after Phase 1 on the basis of a separate consulting assignment. In order for the consultant to be in place by December, staff is seeking Council concurrence with the draft Terms of Reference and direction to issue the Request for Proposals. This will allow the recruitment cycle to take place in October and November. This will allow a seamless transition between Phases 1 and 2, without any unnecessary delays.

Therefore, it is recommended that the recommendation set out above be approved.

Attachments

1. Draft Terms of Reference: Natural Heritage Network Study, Phases 2, 3 and 4

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Report prepared by:

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(A copy of the attachments referred to in the foregoing have been forwarded to each Member of Council and a copy thereof is also on file in the office of the City Clerk.)

Regional Councillor Di Biase declared an interest with respect to the foregoing matter as his children have had a long standing interest in a parcel of land given to them by their maternal Grandfather and did not take part in the discussion or vote on the matter.