

CITY OF VAUGHAN

EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF OCTOBER 8, 2013

Item 13, Report No. 39, of the Committee of the Whole, which was adopted without amendment by the Council of the City of Vaughan on October 8, 2013.

**13 NATURAL HERITAGE NETWORK INVENTORY AND IMPROVEMENTS
 DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT GUIDELINE
 FILE NO. 25.5.4**

The Committee of the Whole recommends:

- 1) That the recommendation contained in the following report of the Commissioner of Planning, dated September 24, 2013, be approved; and**
- 2) That Communication C2, from Mr. Cam Milani, dated September 23, 2013, be received.**

Recommendation

The Commissioner of Planning recommends:

1. That the Draft Environmental Management Guideline (June 2013), being Attachment 1 to this report, BE RECEIVED for information purposes; and
2. That public comment be requested by November 29, 2013 to inform the finalization of the document.

Contribution to Sustainability

VOP 2010 designates a natural heritage system, the Natural Heritage Network (NHN), which is delineated on Schedule 2. Environmental policies in Chapter 3 of VOP 2010 direct that appropriate studies be undertaken to determine the precise limits of "natural heritage features and any additions to the mapped network". The Plan is consistent with York Region Official Plan policies directing local municipalities to develop local greenlands systems.

Two specific action items in Green Directions Vaughan (2009), the City's Community Sustainability and Environmental Master Plan, relate to the need to complete a natural heritage system.

1.3.2. Through the development of the City's new Official Plan, and in partnership with the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, ensure protection of remaining natural features and explore opportunities for habitat restoration in headwater areas, along riparian corridors, and around wetlands.

2.2.4. 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;*
- Develop policies to create opportunities for near urban agriculture within Vaughan's rural areas, through policies described in the City's new Official Plan.*

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The Environmental Management Guideline sets out the general requirements for specific studies, such as an Environmental Impact Study or Master Environment and Servicing Plan, in support of development applications with the potential to have an impact on the NHN.

Economic Impact

Funding for the Natural Heritage Network Study was included in the 2011 and 2012 Capital Budgets (PL-9025-11) for a total budget of \$252,100.

Communications Plan

The Environmental Management Guideline (EMG) is a component of the NHN Study, of which Phase 1 is complete (Committee of the Whole, Working Session, December 4, 2012) and Phases 2 to 4 are currently underway. A communications and public consultation plan is a component of Phases 2 to 4 of the NHN Study, which will include the review and finalization of the EMG. The public consultation plan is currently being refined and will consider various audiences for input and outreach, including: elected officials; Vaughan senior management and staff; targeted stakeholders, including individual meetings with select landowners/developers and/or their agents as well as environmental and community groups; and broader community engagement for residents. Similarly, communications tools will be designed for both broader and targeted outreach, such as: the City web site; the City Page Online; e-newsletters; social media; and/or a discussion guide as an online form and/or comment form at workshops and community events.

This report, including the draft Environmental Management Guideline, will be placed on the City's web site and through other applicable communications forums. Those parties and agencies participating in the preparation of the NHN Study, including landowners and Environmental Organizations will be advised of the issuance of the draft Environmental Management Guideline for comment by way of an E-mail notification.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to update Council on the status of the revised Environmental Management Guideline (EMG) and obtain direction to issue the draft EMG for public comment as part of the NHN Study.

Background - Analysis and Options

The Environmental Management Guideline (EMG) was originally prepared in 1994 in support of Official Plan Amendment 400 and addressed the preparation of an Environmental Impact Study, or other environmental reports, at the scales of the Block Plan and Plan of Subdivision/Site Plan. The EMG was revised in 2010 by City staff following adoption of VOP 2010 in order to reflect the designation of a Natural Heritage Network and policy changes to bring VOP 2010 in conformity with the PPS (2005) and the revised Natural Heritage Reference Manual (2010).

The consulting team of North-South Environmental (NSE) reviewed the revised EMG as part of Phase 1 of the NHN Study. NSE provided recommendations to improve the clarity and effectiveness of the EMG for the submission of environmental reports, such as an Environmental Impact Study (EIS) and Master Environment and Servicing Plan (MESP). The main recommendations are summarized in section 6 of the Phase 1 report, but some of the highlights include:

- Providing a clear outline for Terms of Reference and a work plan to undertake an EIS and/or MESP;
- attention to the transfer of data, particularly GIS data, through the development application process for ongoing revision of the NHN;

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- more emphasis on monitoring requirements and assessment of cumulative effects; and
- significant additions to the methods and protocols required to address assessments of significant wildlife habitat.

Public comment on the EMG will be integrated with the public consultation program for Phases 2 through 4 of the NHN Study.

The Policy and Planning Context

A rigorous Provincial and Regional policy framework exists to direct the maintenance, restoration, or improvement of the diversity and connectivity of natural features and the long-term ecological function and biodiversity of natural heritage systems in the Greater Toronto Area. This policy framework is reflected in the environmental policies of VOP 2010. The following policy documents were consulted in the preparation of the environmental policies of VOP 2010 and the Terms of Reference for Phase 1 and Phases 2 to 4 of the Natural Heritage Network Study:

- The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2006);
- The Provincial Policy Statement (2005) and the Natural Heritage Reference Manual - Second Edition (2010);
- The Greenbelt Plan (2005);
- The Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (2002);
- The Endangered Species Act (2007);
- The Ontario Biodiversity Strategy, 2011;
- The York Region Official Plan (2010); and
- Ontario Regulation 166/06 under the Conservation Authorities Act.

The EMG references a wide range of technical and guidance documents related to the overall objective, as articulated in the Provincial Policy Statement Section 2.1.1, “that natural features and areas shall be protected for the long-term” in support of a viable natural heritage system. Policy support for the EMG is primarily based on the environmental policies of the VOP 2010, the York Region Official Plan (ROP 2010), the Provincial Policy Statement, and the Natural Heritage Reference Manual (OMNR 2010).

Relation to VOP 2010 and Green Directions Vaughan

The overall Natural Heritage Network Study will assess the role of the existing Natural Heritage Network in maintaining elements of biodiversity and ecological functions for the long term, consistent with Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) 2.1.2. At the completion of all phases of the Natural Heritage Network Study, additional NHN areas may be proposed to meet ecosystem targets for the natural heritage system related to biodiversity persistence and ecological function.

At the completion of the Natural Heritage Network Study, an amendment to VOP 2010 will be prepared to implement the findings of the Study to modify Schedule 2, “Natural Heritage Network”, and other affected schedules and any relevant policies in VOP 2010. Schedules may also be added to delineate natural features according to Section 3.3, “Features of the Natural Heritage Network”.

Policy 3.9.1.1 of the VOP 2010 states that the EMG “identifies key management issues and provides guidance in support of the policies of Chapter 3 for the preparation of environmental reporting, to be confirmed based on area-specific issues, in support of development applications”. Policy 3.9.1.2 of the VOP 2010 directs that the EMG be reviewed, updated and refined from time to time. As such, the revised EMG will play a critical role in the implementation of the VOP 2010.

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The protection, restoration and enhancement of natural areas in the City's Natural Heritage Network is one method of achieving healthy and vibrant communities that is reflected in the City's sustainability strategy, Green Directions Vaughan (GDV). While two action items in Green Directions Vaughan specifically address the Natural Heritage Network (Action Items 1.3.2 and 2.2.4), related action items in GDV address green infrastructure (e.g. treatment train approach to stormwater management and urban forests), recreation and open space, trails and other active transportation paths, and agriculture.

Structure of the Environmental Management Guideline

The EMG is structured in three main sections:

- Section A – Introduction;
- Section B – Environmental Reporting Process; and
- Section C – Attributes of the Natural Heritage Network, Natural Features and Ecosystem Functions.

Section A provides the conservation context and policy support for the EMG in documents such as, but not limited to, the Provincial Policy Statement, the Natural Heritage Reference Manual, the Humber River Watershed Plan, and the Don River Watershed Plan.

Section B includes general outlines for EIS and MESP submissions. Importantly, this section includes a discussion of criteria to scope environmental reports, where appropriate, for a given application type.

Section C includes a discussion of the factors to consider regarding the protection, restoration and/or enhancement of individual features (e.g. water resource, valleylands, woodlands, wetlands, etc.) in relation to maintaining or improving the overall NHN. This section is expected to be used as a reference to assist in determining the scope of work and Terms of Reference for environmental reports based on the diversity and complexity of the natural features potentially affected by the proposed development. Each subsection addresses a particular feature type and includes information under the subheadings listed below:

Information Sources - Relevant information sources for known occurrences, standards, best practices, and/or thresholds are listed, including providing web links where available.

Objectives – PPS, York Region Official Plan and VOP 2010 requirements are noted. Possible outcomes of studies are listed in relation to NHN maintenance and/or improvement. Emphasis is given to evaluating options for habitat restoration/enhancement and linkages.

Ecosystem Functions - The common ecological processes associated with natural features are listed. The inventory of attributes may expand on the ecosystem functions.

Inventory -Typical attributes of the biophysical description of the natural feature and ecosystem functions are listed.

Adjacent Lands - Common recommended distances to evaluate impacts from development on adjacent lands are noted.

Interim Application

The VOP 2010 was adopted by Council on September 7, 2010 and was subsequently modified on September 11, 2011, March 20, 2012 and April 17, 2012. The Plan has been appealed and is

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now before the Ontario Municipal Board for approval. Through the pre-hearing process, the City has been obtaining approvals for various portions of the Plan. In recognition of this, the revised EMG is being used to provide guidance in major applications that are submitted in accordance with the approved portions of VOP 2010. Staff will continue with this approach, as it best reflects the requirements of the VOP 2010, which was prepared in compliance with the approved Regional and Provincial policy documents.

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2020/Strategic Plan

The Natural Heritage in the City report is consistent with the Vaughan Vision 2020 Strategic plan, through the following initiatives, specifically:

Service Excellence:

- Lead & Promote Environmental Sustainability:

Issuing a guideline for the interpretation of policies of the VOP 2010, with particular focus on environmental policies and Vaughan's Natural Heritage Network, provides guidance as to how to implement the City's Official Plan in the context of the broader regulatory scheme.

Management Excellence:

- Plan and Manage Growth & Economic Vitality, and
- Demonstrate Leadership & Promote Effective Governance:

The EMG provides a framework for the City to set expectations for submission materials in support of development applications related to the environmental policies of the VOP 2010 and Vaughan's Natural Heritage Network for the purposes of improving environmental outcomes and sustainability and ensuring timely analysis.

This report is consistent with the priorities set by Council.

Regional Implications

Policies in the ROP 2010 support the efforts of local municipalities to identify and implement local greenlands systems.

Conclusion

The EMG has been revised to reflect the designation of a Natural Heritage Network in the VOP 2010 and policy changes to bring the VOP 2010 in conformity with the PPS (2005) and the revised Natural Heritage Reference Manual (2010). Public comment on the EMG will be integrated with the public consultation program for Phases 2 through 4 of the NHN Study. Therefore, it is recommended that this report and attached EMG be received and that it be made available for public comment, which are requested by November 29, 2013.

Attachments

1. Draft Environmental Management Guideline, June 2013.

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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.)