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Communication
cw: Apr 14/15
Item: 1

DATE: APRIL 13, 2015

TO: MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF COUNCIL

FROM: JOHN MACKENZIE, COMMISSIONER OF PLANNING

SUBJECT: ITEM #1 – REPORT #17 – COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE – APRIL 14, 2015

**NATURAL HERITAGE NETWORK INVENTORY AND IMPROVEMENTS,
STUDY COMPLETION AND RECOMMENDATIONS
AMENDMENT TO THE VAUGHAN OFFICIAL PLAN 2010
FILE #25.5.4
WARDS 1 TO 5**

Recommendation

The Commissioner of Planning recommends the following be added to the recommendations in Item #1, Report #17:

1. That prior to Council's adoption of the implementing amendment to VOP 2010, as part of the final staff review, staff continue negotiations with representatives of the landowners including BILD and other stakeholders, in order to resolve or minimize any remaining issues concerning the content of the draft amendment;
2. That upon completion of the negotiations, staff report to Council at the time of adoption of the amendment on the following matters:
 - a) The nature of the agreed to changes to the amendment and the resulting modifications to the text or the schedules;
 - b) Any remaining areas where consensus has not been reached;
3. That any changes to the limits of the Natural Heritage Network resulting from this process be reflected as required on any affected schedules to VOP 2010.

Background – Analysis and Options

City staff has continued to meet with representatives of the Building and Land Development Association (BILD) and the representatives of number of affected landowners to identify and resolve any remaining concerns over the Natural Heritage Network (NHN) Study. The latest meeting took place on April 9, 2015. Its purpose was to discuss the proposed amendments to the Vaughan Official Plan 2010 (VOP 2010) resulting from the NHN Study.

Arriving at consistent interpretations of the policies was at the forefront of the discussions. The meeting was productive and consensus was achieved on a number of issues. The identified responses maintain the overall intent of the environmental policies, while providing greater clarity in their interpretation. The following issues respecting the Schedules and five text policies were addressed. Recommendation 2 in the April 14, 2015 Committee of the Whole report speaks to staff reporting back to Council. As part of the process for finalizing the draft amendment staff will be drafting implementing language to reflect the refinements and the outcome of discussions with BILD and landowner negotiations prior to bringing forward the amendment for Council adoption.

Modifications will be pursued in the following areas:

Infrastructure in Core Features

It was discussed that policy 3.2.3.7 could be interpreted to permit infrastructure in Core Features only when authorized through an Environmental Assessment (EA), whereas the policy intent is to recognize the EA process as one mechanism to approve infrastructure projects along with approvals through other Acts which could also result in infrastructure being approved in Core Features.

Schedules 2A (Hydrologic Features and Valleylands), 2B (Woodlands) and 2C (Significant Wildlife Habitat)

It was agreed that a notation can be included on Schedules 2A to 2C to indicate that the information presented is intended to inform the implementation of the policies in Chapter 3 to delineate the NHN. The notation will draw on a similar notation found in Figure 3 "Greenlands System within York Region" of the Region of York Official Plan.

Wetlands

In relation to wetland assessments in VOP 2010 policy 3.3.2.2, it was suggested to remove the text referring to an assessment "in accordance with criteria provided by the Province". This allows the VOP 2010 to conform to the Provincial Policy Statement while providing for an approach to categorize "other wetlands" into two groups: those that are determined to require an evaluation according to Provincial criteria; and wetlands that can be assessed to determine their importance, functions and means of protection and/or maintenance of function. The industry is concerned that an assessment involving the provincial criteria is not feasible or required in all circumstances. This change in approach and the language of the policy addresses a practical concern about achieving provincial criteria regarding all wetland assessments when it may not be required.

Woodlands

A minor change was discussed for the test to permit development or site alteration in a woodland that is not a significant woodland.

Enhancement Areas Not Depicted on Schedule 2

It was recommended that a reference to a specific dimension for ecological corridors/linkages be removed in favour of an updated policy that emphasizes the function of an ecological linkage to facilitate species movement for target species of concern (e.g. appropriate corridor widths for migrating amphibians).

Other issues remain for BILD and certain landowners. They include concerns related to the compensation policy for features that may be impacted, where such impacts are unavoidable. On the matter of compensation, definitive policies have not been developed in relation to compensation at this time. During the discussion with BILD it was suggested that staff could work with stakeholders to develop a draft protocol that reflects best practices. Once a draft protocol is developed it would be brought forward in a separate report to Committee of the Whole and Council in the future.

Conclusion

Additional discussion prior to Council consideration of the amendment holds the prospect of resolving some or all of the above noted matters. In order to take advantage of this opportunity, it is recommended that staff receive direction on all of the matters in the report, continue with negotiations and report back to

Council when the amendment is considered. The recommendations set out above, if approved by Council will allow staff to continue discussions and to update Council on the outcome.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'J' followed by several vertical strokes and a horizontal line extending to the right.

JOHN MACKENZIE
Commissioner of Planning

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Copy To: Barbara Cribbitt, Interim City Manager
 Jeffrey A. Abrams, City Clerk
 Roy McQuillin, Acting Director of Policy Planning
 Tony Iacobelli, Senior Environmental Planner