

Ottawa Forests and Greenspace Advisory Committee presentation to
Corporate Services and Economic Development Committee
Property Acquisition – DCR/Phoenix ACS2006-RPM-0007
6350 Fernbank Road, Stittsville 17 Jan 2006

The Ottawa Forests and Greenspace Advisory Committee supports the purchase of these two blocks of land, totalling 3.04 ha.

We support the purchase of wetlands because they are so vital to the functioning of our global ecosystem. Regrettably, popular opinion seems to consider wetlands as wasteland, not worthy of consideration or preservation. They are important as sinks (repositories) for carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases such as methane and the oxides of nitrogen. Destruction of wetlands releases these greenhouse gases. Wetlands also serve as aquifer recharge systems, cleansing our drinking water, for example.

Residents of the eastern part of Ottawa understand the importance of wetlands and the role they play in keeping their wells running – that is why they support the Bog-to-Bog initiative. That is also why we are supporting this purchase in the western end of Ottawa and we urge you to do the same.

The map provided in the staff report is not easy to understand, especially when compared to the map for Urban Natural Area 132 from the Urban Natural Areas Environmental Evaluation Study. Nor does the staff report tell you about land in the same wetland that is being provided to the city at no cost. There is more detail in the report that will go to PEC next week dealing with the OP amendment and zoning change proposal that is predicated on the agreement that the city buy some of the land.

From the staff report we learn only that a parcel of upland forest (1) and a parcel of wetland (3) will be preserved through this purchase. We understand from email correspondence that wetland parcel 2 is to be conveyed to the city if the land sale is approved. Parcel 2 lies between 1 and 3 and to the south of 3. That conveyance does address our concern about how connectivity (for water and wildlife) will be maintained and how integrity of the wetland will be assured – assuming that the development to the north does not dry up the wetland in the future.

Council is being asked to approve this purchase at developer's residential prices. However, adding wetland parcel 2 (for the same price) does bring down the price on a per hectare basis.

The email correspondence to which I referred also indicates that a further two blocks, numbered 174 and 175 will also be conveyed to the city (at no cost) along with block 207 which is proposed to be used as a stormwater management pond an issue and location that will be addressed later in the development approval process, along with the Westridge Drive location.

We have been assured (via email from Councillor Stavinga) that the upland forest parcel 1 will be managed as a forest for passive use – not cut down to provide a soccer field. We will also seek assurances, probably next week at PEC, that there will be no acceptance of Cash-in Lieu of parkland and that if possible, the required 5% parkland set-aside will be taken as land and added to either of the parcels of land being purchased or “gifted” to the city.

We applaud any decision to acquire wetlands for the future – our survival depends on them. We therefore urge you to vote in favour of this sale now (do not defer the item to a later, unknown date) and to forward that positive recommendation to Council for ratification as soon as is possible.

Iola Price,
Chair,
Ottawa Forests and Greenspace Advisory Committee
17 January 2006