

Ottawa Forests and Greenspace Advisory Committee
 Presentation to Planning and Environment Committee 13 June 2006

Agenda item 13: Subdivision – 4787, 4789, 4738, and 4742 Bank St. Findlay Creek Tartan Dev.

Slide 1: The file on the Leitrim Wetland and then Findlay Creek subdivision is voluminous. It would take over 60 minutes to detail all of the issues that have arisen. I have only 10, so much will be left out.

Slide 2: One problem is that our society does not value wetlands. Some people see only the swamp to be drained. Very few recognize their value of cleansers of water, regulators of storm water flows and floods, sinks for greenhouse gases, and homes for wildlife. There is trouble in this particular Paradise.

Slide 3: Please, listen very carefully to the comments from the Environmental Advisory Committee and speakers who follow in regard to identified problems with this whole development. It is highly probable that a plume of contaminated water is heading for the subdivision planned for Phase 2 part 1. There may even be contaminated water under houses that have already been built.

There are identified problems with the Area Wide Risk Assessment upon which the determinations of “no problem” were made. We will show slides and photos of damage to the wetland that was supposed to be protected. Water levels were supposed to remain stable – they have risen – drowning trees. The creation of the bypass ditch/diversion of Findlay creek and the fact that there is no overhanging shoreline vegetation will increase the water temperature. We have lost a cool water creek. Vegetation removal in Phase 2 part 1 has taken place - that should not happen before subdivision approval. This is a recurring problem and one that Councillors must address at some point. Developers are clearing many ecologically valuable natural areas in advance of receiving City approvals for construction.

Slide 4: Subject to the appropriate approvals and notifications, it seems that there is consensus that parts 3 and 4 of Phase 2 could proceed. (shown on document 2, page 98 of agenda) We do, however, strongly recommend that you defer approval of parts 1 and 2, each for different reasons.

Slide 5: There is a world of difference between the UNA report done for the City (and the developer) and the data from Albert Dugal, a well-respected botanist. I visited part of UNA 108 on June 8 and saw plants and trees that are not mentioned in the UNA report. There are many old and large trees on just one part of the site and I do not understand why they are not mentioned. There are undoubtedly more large trees elsewhere in UNA but I did not have time to look. There are many more species of plants and large trees in UNA 108, even in the small part I walked through, than are listed in the entire UNA report. I could provide details if requested.

The discrepancies are too large to ignore – there must be a re-evaluation UNA 108. The site was rated as being at the high end of the Low ranking. It would almost certainly rise in rating if evaluated in its entirety and in the company of Mr. Dugal who could help identify the plants.

Slide 6: The upper right hand corner (north-east) of Part 2 is a lowland cedar woods. It differs from the upland forest that most of us know. The part that we propose for retention contains old (100 - 175 year old Eastern White-cedars, Red Maples, White and Yellow Birches, Black Cherry, Butternuts (a federally-listed endangered species), Black and Red Ash.

There is also an impressive array of understory plants – mosses, lichens, herbaceous plants and shrubs. As well, the remains of very old Elms felled by DED in the 1970s are there on the ground covered with moss. From the current state of this little patch, I can deduce that it was only lightly harvested for wood - it did not have firewood species. The invasive buckthorn could be removed from this area.

Slide 7: From the southern edge of the new channel of Findlay Creek to the edge of the former creek channel plus a buffer of 5 m on the south and westerly side of the former creek bed. This would take in the existing buffer blocks numbered 183 and 184, a street running parallel to the buffer block 184, part of

the Park block 169, block 154 and possibly part of block 155. Details would need to be worked out on the ground. Blocks 182 and 185 would remain “as is”.

Consider it as part compensation for the damage done to the wetland that was supposed to be protected. Keep it as a passive woodlot to remain untouched except for invasives removal, to show what a lowland forest looks like. It would be a useful teaching site for the local schools and a heritage reminder of the Hope family who formerly owned the site.

Slide 8: Construction debris such as shown in the upper right hand of the slide (taken June 8) is scattered inland of the new channel for Findlay Creek. It is obvious that it has been there for months, possibly since 2005. There is more such debris in the new channel itself (here in UNA 108 and in the newly-constructed by-pass ditch). The sediment filter (left hand of the slide) has not been monitored and maintained as required by Fisheries and Oceans Habitat Regulations and the approvals given for this development.

The developer promised (and you will hear more on this from Mr. Dugal) that the part of the OMB-defined wetland on the Tartan property, would be protected. The picture lower right shows dead (brown) trees in the background and dead White Birches to the right. These trees drowned – too much or too little water kills a wetland. Reparations and quick remediation are required.

Slide 9: If the Risk Assessment was flawed, as a number of experts believe, then assumptions made about the safety issues and movement of contaminants out of the federal landfill are wrong.

The peer reviewer of the original risk assessment did not have access to the actual data (numbers). He should be given those numbers and asked to re-do his assessment. What if contaminants move through the groundwater, upwell under the subdivision, move via pipes and fill to basements and from there, pass as vapour into homes? Should we not be 100% certain and in the absence of certainty, adhere to the Precautionary Principle?

Slide 10: Council Motion 52/4 required the compilation of stakeholder reports on the Leitrim Development, detailing that all actions are in accordance with the recommendations of various Federal and Provincial Agencies. These reports were to be transmitted to the Environmental Advisory Committee on a monthly basis. It appears that only one report was received (March 2006).

It outlines a number of concerns about activities, some of which have been mentioned and will be mentioned in further detail by other presenters.

Partial List of identified concerns : Lack of sediment control measures; Flooding in wetland; Lack of consultation with NGOs and DFO; No clear details on water flowing into east drain upon reaching Leitrim Road; Sediment laden waters entering Findlay Creek; No fish stranding program received; Fisheries Act Authorization expires March 14 – city in violation?; 15 m buffer in phase 2 not followed as vegetation cut right up to Findlay Creek where new culvert will be installed.

There should be mention made of the requirement, as outlined in the MOE letter of 16 May 2006 that “... appropriate measures have been implemented by Transport Canada and the City of Ottawa to communicate to local residents the risks associated with contamination from the Transport Canada site.”.

The smart moves would be to

- defer approval of the entire Phase 2 (preferred option) but as a minimum, defer approval of parts 1 and 2 until all agreed-upon information is provided;
- appoint a scientific panel to review the contaminant and the wetland issues;
- re-do the UNA study for site 108; and
- create a small passive woodlot from the cedar woodlot in Part 2 along the banks of Findlay Creek as partial reparations for the damage to the wetland.

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