



City Clerk's Office

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November 19, 2008

To: Government Management Committee
From: Task Force to Bring Back the Don
Subject: Sale of City Property, Potential Value of City's Natural Heritage

Recommendations:

The Task Force to Bring Back the Don requests the Government Management Committee to direct the Chief Corporate Officer to advise the Acting General Manager, Parks, Forestry and Recreation, of any City property that is considered for sale, in order that she may assess the potential value with regard to the City's precious natural heritage and forward any recommendations deemed necessary to the Government Management Committee.

Action taken by the Task Force to Bring Back the Don:

The Task Force to Bring Back the Don requests that a copy of the foregoing decision be forwarded to Mayor Miller, the Acting General Manager, Parks, Recreation and Forestry, and the Director, Urban Forestry for their information.

Background:

The Task Force to Bring Back the Don, on November 19, 2008, considered the Minutes of the Habitat Restoration Team meeting held in November 2008, which also included documents entitled "What We Cannot Do With Trees" and "Task Force to Bring Back the Don".

City Clerk

Item No. 3(1)
Att.

- c. Mayor Miller
Acting General Manager, Parks, Recreation and Forestry
Director, Urban Forestry
Planner, Policy and Research, City Planning

Habitat Restoration Team Report – Nov. 2008

Present: John Routh, Norah Murphy, Paula Davies, Steve Smith, Glenn Gillespie, Janice Palmer

1. The next HR Team meeting is scheduled for Monday, Dec.8, 2008 - 6:30 p.m. Committee Room #4 City Hall. See also the list for all of 2009.
2. Janice said that the Climate Change document she'd sent with the agenda will be brought back for discussion whenever someone makes that request. Two "Who to Call" sheets were distributed and their use relevant to Sherwood Park and other parks was described. Paula reported her many calls regarding the mess on Hydro One's property behind Thorncliffe Park buildings. The gate to the area is now locked but the mess has not been removed. Paula also said that it would be a good idea if fines collected for such infractions be set aside for environmental projects.
3. The motions at the Task force from the Team were listed.
4. The information Janette had obtained on our behalf regarding Toronto Public Health's policy regarding wetlands was shared i.e. there is no policy! Steve reported that twice within two months this summer, property owners next to a ravine received letters from the Board of Health requesting them to remove mosquitoes from their property by whatever means they wanted to use. e.g. draining the water that pools there and/or using larvicide. Filling these areas is not allowed by TRCA or Forestry. Clearly, someone went beyond his/her mandate to 'threaten' these home owners. Richard Ubbens and the Toronto Board of Health should communicate with each other about this matter. For a small pool of water, mosquito larvae can be destroyed if the pond is stirred with a stick periodically. We wondered if the number of West Nile carriers has been going up or down or staying the same. Norah said she'd try to find this information for us before we decide whether the Task Force ought to discuss this situation to R. Ubbens.
5. Information from Scott about the Pottery Rd. proposed wetland area was shared. Apparently, initial designs were not satisfactory. Comments were sent back to TRCA. We will be asked for input when the next phase is completed.
6. It was reported that John Routh had volunteered to take the lead with regard to preparing a broad vision for the Pottery Road snow dump area. We decided that we should visit the site with maps of the area to make notes about existing conditions. Invitations were given to all Task Force members. (nine people attended the site visit on Sunday, Nov. 16) This task is only the beginning of this major project. We'd like to ask Janette to ask Gary Welsh when this area is going to be delisted as an emergency snow dump in light of the fact that it has not been used since 2001 and that even with last year's record snowfall, the area was not used.(MOTION?)
7. John Routh reported that the Beechwood Wetland where he has led a stewardship team for several years does not require steady work any longer and that he will now be leading a team at the Golding Estate area of Taylor Massey Creek. Norah reported that 9-10 people attended the workshop to receive training to be stewardship leaders, especially with regard to motivating, inspiring and educating regular stewards.
8. We are interested in establishing new guidelines for species selection for memorial trees. We will make recommendations in the future.
9. The whole concept of the City selling some of its property to raise much-needed funds was discussed. We agreed with Paula that the City should be encouraged to consult with the Ravines and Natural Features staff within Forestry when any property is

considered for sale in order to have the site assessed concerning its relative value from a natural heritage standpoint. (MOTION) (special list of recipients)

10. Three examples were used to illustrate how Parks supervisors can deal with different types of illegal activities in natural areas.
11. 'Naturalized Gardens' was deferred to our next meeting.
12. Steve described the proposal to build an arena on an odd piece of property near Don Mills Rd. and the 410. TRCA and Forestry have both said 'No' to this proposal but it will be discussed at the Nov. 18 meeting of North York Community Council.
13. Paula asked that exotics along the DVP be discussed in the near future.
14. Back in the spring, as a result of repeated questions at Task Force displays, Janice said she thought we ought to have handouts to answer these two questions. "What do I have to do if I want to cut a tree on my property?" and "What is the Task Force to Bring Back the Don?" Janice volunteered to create these two items. They are presented now. The exact proposal and format will be discussed. Note that the money to pay for these items will be made available through a private donation if they are approved. (MOTION).

Habitat Restoration Team

Proposed Meeting Schedule for 2009

All meetings will be at 6:30 p.m. in Committee Room #4 City Hall except where noted.

January 12

February 9 – Committee Room #3

March 9

April 6

May 11

June 8

July 6 – Committee Room #3

Aug. 10

September 14

October 5 – Committee Room #3

November 9

December 7

**What We Can and Cannot Do
with Trees**

Property owners often think that they can do whatever they want on their properties. WRONG! Most know already that they have to obtain permits to build additions to their homes, add an extra bathroom or alter their electrical systems. Trees on private property are protected under two by-laws in the City of Toronto. Note that owners may plant native trees and shrubs and smaller plants as well without permits and are encouraged to do so. Private property may also be subject to the regulations of the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority.

Toronto's Ravine and Natural Features Protection By-law

The Ravine Protection By-law controls much more than removing or injuring trees. It controls what can be done on any property located within or partially within a ravine protection area. Property owners are required to obtain a permit to take any action to alter the vegetation, place or remove fill or alter the grade in any way, including any type of construction. This by-law protects trees of any size and any species, not just those over a certain size.

Full details to determine if this by-law applies to any property and the application process for any changes property owners wish to make are available at www.toronto.ca/trees/ravines.htm

Toronto's Private Tree By-law

The City's Private Tree By-law protects trees on private property, outside of ravine protected areas, from injury or destruction. A permit is required to injure or destroy a private tree that has a diameter of 30 cm or greater measured at 1.4 m above ground. A permit is not required to remove dead, terminally diseased or imminently hazardous trees. Pruning private trees using proper arboricultural standards is recommended and does not require a permit.

Full details are available at www.toronto.ca/trees/private_trees.htm

Under both by-laws:

- Trees requiring removal because they are deemed to be dead, terminally diseased or imminently hazardous are exempt from the above noted tree by-laws. Confirmation from Urban Forestry is required prior to proceeding with removal.
- Applications to remove or injure trees must be accompanied by an Arborist Report prepared by a licensed arborist or other professional accepted by Urban Forestry.
- Permits issued to remove or injure trees will be subject to conditions, including tree replacement.
- Convictions under the tree by-laws are subject to hefty fines.

Toronto and Region Conservation Authority

In addition to the City by-laws, a permit may also be required from

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For more information, go to: www.trca.on.ca

This information has been vetted by City of Toronto staff in the Ravine and Natural Features Protection By-law and the Private Tree By-law sections and by a Forestry Policy representative.

*Task Force to
Bring Back the Don*

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Accessible - We encourage the opening of the Don Valley to low-impact human access. We discourage high-impact accessibility (generally meaning ‘motorized’) because it tends to impair the valley for other uses, yielding a net loss. Accessibility is not an absolute goal; we may promote the creation of ‘sanctuaries’ (areas with no human access) in certain locations for the benefit of wildlife; however, in general, we believe that human contact with the natural environment in the Don Valley can create conditions that are positive for all creatures – human and non-human – that use the valley. We promote access for all people, acknowledging that differences in abilities may create differences in the extent and mode of access that is desirable or possible.



Task Force to Bring Back the Don

www.toronto.ca/don



Task Force to Bring Back the Don

Composition

THE TASK FORCE TO BRING BACK THE DON is made up of 23 members, including three Councillors and 20 citizen members who are residents of the City of Toronto and who have a commitment to, and interest in, the Don River and its watershed. The Chair and Vice-Chair(s) are chosen by the Task Force from among the citizen members.

Term of Appointment

Task Force members are appointed for the Term of Council, or until their successors are appointed. The Task Force elects a citizen Chair and Vice-Chair(s) at the beginning of each term, or as determined by the Task Force.

Goal

The Task Force to Bring Back the Don is committed to “bringing back” a clean, green and accessible Don River within the City of Toronto.

Principles

The Task Force to Bring Back the Don operates in accordance with three principles:

- The Task Force is a “citizen-driven” advisory body of City Council;
- The Task Force works with natural processes to bring back the Don;
- The Task Force is committed to working in partnership with all agencies and organizations that share its goal.

<p>Mandate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate and involve Toronto’s citizens in the restoration of the Don Watershed; • Fundraise and establish partnerships for Don watershed restoration projects; • Undertake Don watershed restoration projects in partnership with City departments, outside agencies, community groups, the private sector and individual volunteers; • Act as a watchdog and advise City Council with respect to issues affecting the Don watershed; • Work with the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority and its Don Watershed Regeneration Council; • Advise City Council with respect to the establishment of City-sponsored stewardship groups in conjunction with other environmental initiatives; • Work with community-based stewardship groups from all watersheds within Toronto on watershed restoration issues and responses. <p>Teams</p> <p>Members of the Task Force are expected to participate actively on at least one working team. Teams discuss specific issues and make recommendations to the Task Force. The Habitat Restoration Team deals with habitat protection, creation and restoration projects and stewardship of special areas. The Communications, Outreach and Marketing Team produces and/or organizes two issues of the newsletter per year, new web site information, media contacts, handouts on specific issues and displays at special events. The Policy and Planning Team deals with planning issues and City policies. Issues are often discussed by more than one team.</p> <p>Members of the public are encouraged to become active members on any of these teams without being a member of the Task Force itself.</p>	<p>“Clean, green and accessible” means a great deal to those who wish to bring back the Don River, valley and watershed. Most people understand what these words mean; however, a few issues need to be clarified.</p> <p>Clean - Clean refers to two somewhat related conditions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clear of litter and illegally dumped garbage 2. Free of anthropogenic (human-made) pollutants in the soil, water and air. <p>We promote initiatives that prevent or reduce the former problems, and we judge initiatives positively that clean up or reduce releases of the latter. Note that releases of pollutants to water or air may occur far from the Don River; therefore, we may provide advice to the City on developments, projects or activities anywhere in the Don watershed</p> <p>Green - ‘Green’ in the context of the Don Valley means biologically diverse and healthy. We promote biodiversity in the Don Valley, not simply anything that is coloured green. Because native plants tend to create conditions that optimize species diversity, we are selective in protecting and restoring plant species native to the local region. While we are sensitive to challenges that come with urbanization, we wish to ‘mend the web of life’, as much as possible; therefore, we advise against, and reject, the introduction of species to the Don Valley, that are not native or that are invasive. We frequently attempt to control such species.</p> <p>In addition, we support measures that minimize negative impacts related to anthropogenic activities in the watershed. Such measures may include, for example, low impact development and the consolidation of infrastructure located in the valley. In general, we apply a net gain principle in order to strive to achieve the highest overall benefit for the valley.</p>
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