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2015 OPERATING BUDGET BRIEFING NOTE

Tree Planting Program

Issue:

- At the February 4th Budget Committee meeting, the Budget Committee requested that Parks, Forestry and Recreation (PF&R) provide a briefing note on the comparison of the tree planting plan as supported by the proposed budget and the Council approved tree planting plan.

Background:

- Toronto has a Council approved target to increase the tree canopy from 26.6%-28% to 40% canopy coverage over the next 40-50 years.
- Expanding the canopy requires sustained focus on maintaining and protecting existing trees as well as new tree planting, as outlined in Council approved Strategic Forest Management Plan.
- In 2008, Council approved the Urban Forestry 8 year Financial Plan, from 2009 to 2016, that would enable the program to achieve the City's tree canopy objectives.
- In 2012, Council approved the extension of the Financial Plan timeframe by 7 years, to 2023, in order to obtain the necessary resources and implement the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) Management strategy which was presented as a consolidated funding strategy.
- The 2014 Council Approved Operating Budget for tree planting was \$8.1 million gross and \$2.9 million net which supports the planting of approximately 100,000 trees annually. Funding of \$7.3 million gross is directed towards tree planting and the remaining funds support management and stewardship of natural areas and ravines.
- The 2015 Recommended Operating Budget for tree planting activities is \$8.9 million gross and \$3.5 million net and approximately 105,000 trees will be planted annually. Funding of \$7.3 million gross is directed towards tree planting and \$1.6 million gross is the management and stewardship of natural areas and ravines.
- The 2015 budget included an additional \$0.5 million gross, \$0.4 million net for enhanced tree planting and to build partnerships with the Toronto Parks and Trees Foundation (TPTF) with the potential for future partnerships to support the tree canopy objectives.

Key Points:

- Funding and service levels for the Revised Forestry Service Plan have been maintained at 2011 levels while Urban Forestry focuses on implementing the EAB management strategy to mitigate the impacts that extensive tree mortality will have on the tree canopy. Focus will revert back to implementing the Forestry Service Plan beginning in 2017 as EAB subsides.

- The 2014 budget for tree planting is \$7.3 million gross and \$2.5 million net and approximately 100,000 trees are planted annually which represents approximately 13% of the Urban Forestry Budget.
- With the additional \$0.5 million gross, \$0.4 million net funding for enhanced tree planting, the 2015 Recommended Operating Budget will allow Urban Forestry to plant approximately 105,000 trees annually.

Table 1: Comparison of the 2012 Council Approved Tree Planting Plan and the 2015 Recommended Budget Tree Planting Plan

2012 Council Approved Tree Planting Plan			2015 Recommended Budget Tree Planting Plan		
Year	Total Funding (\$000's)	Total # Trees Planted	Year	Total Funding (\$000's)	Total # Trees Planted
2015	\$ 7,300	100,000	2015	\$ 7,800	105,000
2016	\$ 7,300	100,000	2016	\$ 7,800	105,000
2017	\$ 7,794	103,920	2017	\$ 8,294	110,587
2018	\$ 8,431	112,413	2018	\$ 8,931	119,080
2019	\$ 8,431	112,413	2019	\$ 8,931	119,080
2020	\$ 8,977	119,693	2020	\$ 9,477	126,360
2021	\$ 8,977	119,693	2021	\$ 9,477	126,360
2022	\$ 9,042	120,560	2022	\$ 9,542	127,227
2023	\$ 9,107	121,427	2023	\$ 9,607	128,093
Total	\$ 75,359	1,010,120	Total	\$ 79,859	1,066,787

As outlined in the table above, approximately 60,000 additional trees would be planted over 9 years as a result of the 2015 Recommended Operating Budget Tree Planting Plan compared to the 2012 Council Approved Funding Plan at an incremental cost of \$4.5 million.

Implementation Plan Dependencies:

- In order to achieve the tree canopy objectives Parks, Forestry & Recreation will be dependent on attracting and aligning sufficient partnerships and service delivery partners.
- In 2015, Parks, Forestry & Recreation will be providing a \$0.1 million grant to the TPTF in anticipation that they will generate future partnerships for investment in the tree canopy.
- Developing effective public/private partnerships is also a key element of expanding Toronto's urban forest as much of the plantable space available in the city is on private land, including residential properties as well as commercial and industrial land.
- Collaboration and cultivation of partnerships with all public landholders as well as with private sector, non-profit and grassroots organizations is crucial to attaining the tree canopy objectives.

Questions & Answers:

Q: Where does Urban Forestry currently plant trees?

A: Urban Forestry plants trees on City owned road allowances, in Parks owned by the City or the Toronto & Region Conservation Authority, in hydro corridors and on Toronto Catholic District School Board lands. The City provides trees to the Toronto District School Board as well.

Q: What size of tree will this funding provide for?

A: Tree planting can generally be grouped into three size categories as follows:

- Trees in a wire basket, 60 mm calliper, 3-5 m height (13%)
- Trees in a 15 gallon pot or bare root, 30 mm calliper, 2-3 m height (11%)
- Trees in a 15 cm pot, 1 m height or greater (76%)

Q: What are some of the constraints/conflicts that restrict tree planting in Toronto?

A:

- Overhead/underground utilities (i.e. hydro, gas, water etc.)
- Narrow width of street boulevards (reduced soil volume)
- Small lot sizes where driveways reduce the area of soft landscape available for tree planting
- Hard/impermeable surfaces in the portion of street boulevards not used for driving or sidewalks and the higher cost of installing tree planting beds under sidewalks
- Recreational land uses in parks that are in conflict with trees (e.g. sportsfields, playgrounds, dog off leash areas, community allotment gardens etc.)
- Soil erosion and soil retaining structures where slopes have been engineered for stability
- Poor quality soils that cannot support tree growth
- Lack of support from a segment of public residents/commercial businesses for planting trees on street boulevards (people may not want shade, leaf cleanup, barriers to views etc.)
- Redevelopment pressures and balance of consideration to sell lands to generate revenue

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