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GREENLANDS PROPERTY SECUREMENT HALL AND PATTERSON TRACT CONNECTION

The Transportation and Works Committee recommends:

- 1. The presentation by Crystal Von Richter, Regional Forest Advisory Team, be received with thanks; and**
- 2. The recommendations contained in the following report, December 14, 2005, from the Commissioner of Transportation and Works and Commissioner of Corporate Services be adopted:**

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Regional Council authorize the acquisition of 0.7 hectares (1.73 acres) of Part Lot 22 Concession 7, Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville for the sum of \$8,650 upon successful acquisition of the property by the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville.
2. The funds be provided from the Greening Land Securement Reserve to the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville for the property acquisition.
3. The Regional Clerk forward this report to the Clerk of the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval of the staff recommendation for the acquisition of the Hall and Patterson Tract connection for consolidation with the York Regional Forest as part of the Greening and Securement Strategies.

3. BACKGROUND

In November 2005, Transportation and Works received a request from the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville for funding assistance and title transfer of a 0.7 hectare (1.73 acre) woodlot (*Attachment 1*). The property is strategically located between the Hall and Patterson Tracts of the York Regional Forest and is designated as Natural Core on the Oak Ridges Moraine (*Attachment 2*).

In the past, there was a traditional link between the Hall and Patterson Tracts via a trail system across several private properties. The construction of an estate residential subdivision removed a portion of one of the trails linking the tracts. To maintain the connection between the tracts, a walkway block was established from the subdivision to the Patterson Tract and an informal trail was established through a Town stormwater management area to the Hall Tract (Calandra property).

This link requires forest users to leave the Regional Forest trail system and cross through the subdivision. The Oak Ridges Trail provided an alternate link between the two tracts also crossing private property.

Regional staff have been discussing with the Town potential options to facilitate improved connections for the York Regional Forest. The Town has secured this acquisition opportunity which is consistent with our long-term management interest for the York Regional Forest.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

4.1 Securement Assessment

The subject property is located between the Patterson and Hall Tracts forming a link between the two forest tracts. If the subject property was to be obtained, it would link the Patterson, Hall and Eldred King Tract, forming a continuously connected system of Regional Forest Tracts totalling 377.7 hectares (933.3 acres). This link would eliminate the need to use the subdivision for travelling between forest tracts.

The Oak Ridges Trail currently utilizes both the Patterson and Hall Tracts and is linked via a section across private property. The Oak Ridges Trail Strategic Plan (February 2004) identifies where opportunities exist the trail should be located on land in public ownership. The acquisition of this property would permit the relocation of the trail between the Patterson and Hall Tract to public land in the York Regional Forest.

The Internal Evaluation Team, established under the Regional Securement Strategy, has reviewed and assessed this potential securement opportunity and is supportive of its acquisition by the Region. The team members include the Director of Realty Services, Director of Commercial Law, Manager of Natural Heritage and Forestry Services, Regional Greening Coordinator, Senior Coordinator Capital and Development Financing, and Senior Planner, Long Range and Strategic Planning.

Under the Greening Strategy, partnerships with local municipalities and conservation organizations are critical to the successful acquisition of properties. The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville has indicated its willingness to be an active partner in the acquisition of the property through leading the acquisition of the property assuming all the legal, appraisal and survey costs. The Town has approached the owner of the subject property with an offer to purchase based on an appraised value of \$5,000 per acre. This

appraised value is consistent with the appraised value of the adjacent property purchased by the Region in the spring of 2004.

The York Regional Forest Advisory Team (RFAT), a volunteer group established under the York Regional Forest Management Plan 1998-2018 (adopted by Council December 10, 1998 Clause 5 of Report No. 20) has come forward with a donation of \$1,000 towards the purchase of the property. RFAT is a valuable partner in the management of the York Regional Forest.

4.2 Relationship to Vision 2026

The Greenlands Property Securement Strategy continues to support Vision 2026 and such key goal statements as:

“In 2026, York Region residents will continue to value and embrace the Region’s unique natural heritage (land, air, water) and cultural heritage (sites and buildings important to our history, faiths and cultures).”

“In 2026, York Region will have grown at a pace that supports healthy communities, economic vitality, sustainable natural environment and effective human services.”

The strategy strengthens the Region’s commitment to focus on Vision 2026 action areas including:

- Protecting sensitive features such as forests, watersheds, the Oak Ridges Moraine and Lake Simcoe.
- Promoting a permanent linked Greenlands system.
- Continuing to develop and build strategies for a green region, such as the York Regional Forest Management Plan, the Greening Strategy and the Greenlands Property Securement Strategy.
- Taking a leadership role in the development and implementation of environmental strategies and conservation activities.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

In April 2001, Council approved the Greenlands Property Securement Strategy – A Legacy for our Future. This approval identified funding of \$1,400,000 annually from 2003 to support securement initiatives. With a purchase price of \$8,650, the cost to the Region is based on \$5,000 per acre. The financial donation from the York Regional Forest Advisory Team of \$1,000 will reduce the Region’s contribution to the purchase

price to \$7,650. The Greenlands Property Securement Reserve currently has approximately \$2,200,000. As such, there are sufficient funds in the reserve to complete the purchase.

The subject property will require some minor property upgrades including the construction of a trail and installation of signage. The funds (\$5,000) required to implement these property upgrades are included in the proposed 2006 Roads Operating Budget.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Local municipalities are important partners in the implementation of the Securement Strategy. As Greenlands are protected and enhanced through securement initiatives, local municipalities benefit from the multiple enhancements to both their communities and the natural environment. The York Regional Forest is a prominent feature on the Whitchurch-Stouffville landscape. This expansion of the Regional Forest will further enhance the trail system, and the natural environment, as a resource to residents across the Region.

7. CONCLUSION

Regional staff and the Internal Evaluation Team for Securement Initiatives have reviewed and assessed this opportunity for the acquisition of greenspace. Staff is recommending that funds be allocated for the securement of the subject property and that the property be transferred into Regional ownership as part of the York Regional Forest.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachments referred to in this clause are attached to this report.)