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GREENING SECUREMENT DIRECTIONS REPORT WOLSKE PROPERTY ACQUISITION TOWN OF GEORGINA

The Transportation and Works Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report, May 28, 2008, from the Commissioner of Transportation Services:

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. The Commissioner of Corporate Services be directed to complete the acquisition, in accordance with the terms of the agreement, of a parcel of land described as being Part of Lot 21, Concession 5, Town of Georgina, having an area of approximately 4.5 hectares (11.14 ac) and presently owned by Mr. Helmut and Ms. Georgina Wolske for \$83,697 plus associated land transfer costs.

2. PURPOSE

Mr. Helmut Wolske, the owner of 4.5ha of land adjacent to the existing Godfrey Tract of the York Regional Forest (*Attachment 1*), being Part of Lot 21, Concession 5, Town of Georgina, has accepted an offer to purchase by the Region for the amount of \$83,697. As a significant Greening Strategy achievement, Council direction is being sought to finalize the Wolske acquisition and obtain the land to consolidate with, and provide public access to, the existing Godfrey Tract of the York Regional Forest.

3. BACKGROUND

In 2001, the Region adopted the Greening and Greenlands Property Securement Strategies, and allocated budget to secure strategic natural heritage properties within York Region

In 2001, Regional Council adopted the Greening and Greenlands Property Securement Strategies. In support of these strategies, \$1.4M is allocated annually to allow for the delivery of a number of Greening Strategy programs (tree planting, education, rehabilitation etc.) and to secure strategic environmental lands. Since 2001, a total of 20 properties (535 ha) have been secured with a total value exceeding \$30M. Properties can be secured using a number of means ranging from stewardship agreements, donations, and conservation easements to fee simple acquisition by the Region or a partner. The

Region continues to demonstrate leadership through our strategic land securement program and our investment in green infrastructure.

In a continuing effort to secure property in accordance with the Greenlands Property Securement Strategy, the consultant identified a property owned by Mr. and Mrs. Wolske that appeared to be a fit with the Greening Strategy. In 2005, Mr. Wolske was approached to explore opportunities to secure portions of the strategic property in order to gain access to a currently landlocked Tract of the York Regional Forest (Godfrey).

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

4.1 OPPORTUNITIES PROVIDED BY THIS STRATEGIC ACQUISITION

Access to the York Regional Forest, Godfrey Tract will be provided by this strategic acquisition

The existing Godfrey Tract of the York Regional Forest is 35.8 ha in size and located on the north side of Old Homestead Road just west of Pepperlaw. The Godfrey Tract is currently landlocked (has no frontage on a public road) and is bisected by a CN rail line. The forested lands subject to this acquisition opportunity are immediately east of, and contiguous with, the Godfrey Tract of the York Regional Forest. Acquisition of this strategic property will provide access to the Godfrey Tract from Old Homestead Road. This access will allow access for Forest Management (secondary agreements will not be necessary), and will provide a public access point for passive recreation. To date, promotion of access to this tract, through documents such as *The Everyday Guide to the York Regional Forest*, has not been possible as legal access was not available.

Once legal access to the Godfrey Tract is obtained through successful acquisition of the Wolske property staff will explore options to gain safe legal access to that portion of the Tract located north of the CN line. Options could include a formalized crossing of the rail line or access via another strategic acquisition.

4.2 INTERNAL EVALUATION TEAM (IET) SECUREMENT ASSESSMENT

The IET recommends this property for acquisition

In order to evaluate properties for acquisition, an Internal Evaluation Team (IET) was established. The Region's Internal Evaluation Team, consists of senior staff from Planning, Legal, Finance, Realty Services and Transportation Services. The IET has considered this property against the Regional Securement Criteria and deem it a high priority for Regional involvement in securement for the following reasons:

- The property provides public road access (Old Homestead) to the currently land locked Godfrey Tract of the York Regional Forest.
- The property will allow for an increase in public recreation and education opportunities within the York Regional Forest.
- The acquisition places another 4.5 hectares of significant forest cover into public ownership.

The Wolske property, in relation to the adjacent Godfrey Tract of the York Regional Forest, is shown on *Attachment 1*.

The IET has reviewed this proposal and find the property to be a high priority for Regional acquisition. Their recommendations included that:

- The property should be acquired by the Region at the appraised value of \$7,511/ac, at a total acquisition cost of \$83,400.

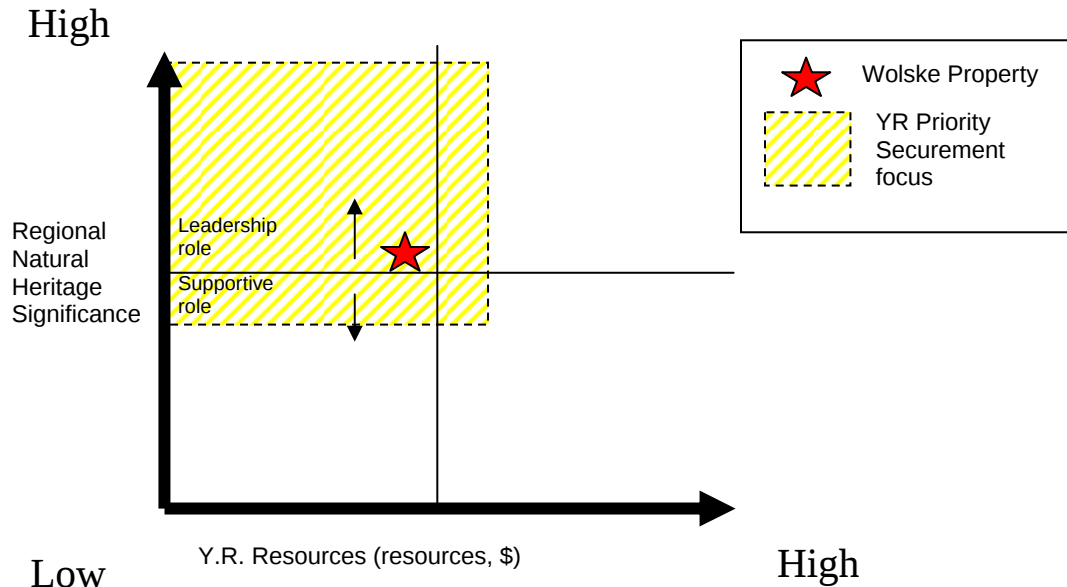
In the interest of expanding the Regional Forest and reforestation of the property, York Region should be the sole title holder and manager of the property.

4.3 REGIONAL PRIORITY MATRIX

The Regional Securement Priority Matrix confirms this property as a high priority property, appropriate for acquisition

This property is a high priority for acquisition as it provides public access to a currently landlocked tract of the York Regional Forest (Godfrey Tract). When assessed against the securement criteria, it is recognized that it will require minimal York Region resources to secure. The Region seeks to focus its resources on properties that have a high Natural heritage Significance and also fall within the top left quadrant of the matrix (Figure 1).

Figure 1
Regional Priority Matrix



The Wolske property has been plotted on the matrix to graphically demonstrate how this property is assessed against the Regional Securement Criteria. While the natural heritage value of the Wolske property is moderate (51/100 on the Evaluation Criteria checklist), it represents a significant opportunity for the Region to obtain a strategic forested property which provides access to a currently landlocked tract of the York Regional Forest. Without this access, management and operation of the existing Godfrey Tract is limited, and public access for recreational and educational purposes is not possible. The price per acre of \$7,511/ac is seen as appropriate given that it is a buildable lot with frontage on Old Homestead Road.

4.4 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

Staff has negotiated a successful offer of purchase with Mr. Wolske for the acquisition of natural heritage lands

Mr. Wolske currently owns the developable 4.5 hectares of land in the Town of Georgina, Community of Pepperlaw (*Attachment 1*) adjacent to the Godfrey Tract. An appraisal was undertaken for the property and found satisfactory by Property Services and Natural Heritage and Forestry Services Section staff. This appraisal was reflected in the accepted offer to purchase and the resulting acquisition price of \$83, 697 reflected in this report.

Sufficient funds are available in the Greenlands Property Securement Reserve for the Wolske property acquisition

In April 2001, Council approved the Greenlands Property Securement Strategy – A Legacy for our Future. This approval included the establishment of the Greenlands Property Securement Reserve with annual contributions of \$1,400,000 from 2003 on (contributions were phased in over 2001 and 2002). The approximate current balance (2008) of the Reserve is \$6,300,000. This purchase, at \$83,400 (approximately \$7,500 per acre) will be funded from the Greenlands Property Securement Reserve. Following a positive Council endorsement, the acquisition is expected to close this summer. There are sufficient funds in the Greenlands Property Securement Reserve for the Wolske purchase.

Operational management of this addition to the York Regional Forest will be provided for through the existing budget allocation

This small but strategic addition to the Godfrey Tract will possibly require some trail enhancement and consideration for access across the CN rail track. Budget will be drawn from re-prioritizing the York Regional Forest capital and operating allocation as required.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Local municipalities are important partners in the implementation of the Securement Strategy. Town of Georgina staff has been consulted as negotiations with the landowner progressed; they are supportive of this Regional acquisition. 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 Town of Georgina landscape. This expansion of the Regional Forest will further protect and enhance the Forest, the services they provide, and the natural environment, as a resource to residents across the Region.

7. CONCLUSION

The lands, which are the subject of this report, are integral to advancing the objectives of the Greening and Securement Strategies and is considered to be a key strategic acquisition as it provides necessary direct access to the Godfrey Tract of the Regional Forest in the Town of Georgina for both forest management and for public open space access.

It is recommended that the acquisition of the Wolske Property be completed.

For more information on this report, contact Paul Jankowski, General Manager, Roads, Roads Branch at extension 5901 in the Transportation Services Department.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachment referred to in this clause is attached to this report.)