

Delegation on PB-03/10 “Cootes to Escarpment Parks System Final Report”

January 18, 2010 Community Development Committee

Good evening Chair Thoen, Committee member, staff & citizens.

BurlingtonGreen is asking that you approve PB-03/10, the “Cootes to Escarpment Parks System (CEPS) Final Report” including endorsing the final report and directing staff to collaborate with partner agencies to complete the implementation actions required to secure the System’s foundation.

With its focus on conservation, protection and acquiring additional park system areas, the CEPS will provide significant benefits to the local and regional environment, including maintaining current eco system benefits such as watershed features, biodiversity and carbon sequestration.

As the CEPS is developed, it will also provide our city, region and province with an attractive, unique, extensive and accessible natural heritage system based on the Cootes to Escarpment area. As well as outdoor recreation facilities for local residents, it could be attractive to the approximately 18% of same-day visitors who hike outdoors.

While providing clear benefits and opportunities for Burlington, implementation of the Parks System could entail a key challenge for Burlington as well.

The CEPS October 2009 Phase II Report identifies the need to add 1500 to 1800 acres to the system and is unfortunately vague on how this will be funded other than voluntary agreements to sell or donate land, Provincial or Federal endowments and the need for discussions between Parks System partners to identify appropriate funding mechanisms. As some of the proposed acquisitions are in Burlington, the funding for these could require city financing.

The PB-03/10 identifies a key concern from the foregoing – the potential need for Burlington to “assess future funding decisions about strategic land parcels in light of the Strategic Land Acquisition Funding Strategy”.

Deciding green land acquisition priorities including the lands for the CEPS will be difficult without a plan that identifies inventories, maps and prioritizes all Burlington green spaces and outlines a strategy for the acquisition of those that are critical to sustaining or improving Burlington’s environment. Accordingly, we again ask that Burlington develop a Greenspace/Natural Heritage System Master Plan to accomplish this goal.

An example of an established greenspace master plan can be found on the City of Ottawa’s website (http://www.ottawa.ca/residents/planning/master_plans/gmp/index_en.html) and I believe Amy Schnurr also provided a copy to the clerk for your review with our December 9 input regarding the proposed Parks & Rec & Cultural master plan report.

Thank you for this opportunity.

Ken Woodruff
Board of Directors
BurlingtonGreen Environmental Association