

Presentation to
Planning and Environment Committee
February 13, 2007
Ottawa Forests and Greenspace Advisory Committee

Agenda Item 9: Zoning – Part of 4798 Bank Street

Consistent with our previous presentations on the development proposals at Leitrim, the Ottawa Forests and Greenspace Advisory Committee recommends against the re-zoning of the following parcels of land:

- Area B adjacent to Bank St and paralleling Findlay Creek and that part of Area A immediately below it down to the southerly limits of UNA 108 or whatever is left of UNA at its southern limit now that the major pipe line has been installed;
- Those western parts of Areas A and B that were originally defined as wetland by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources in 1989 and the consultant Cumming Coburn in 1990. These are
 - That part of Area B immediately east of the OMB-defined boundary of the Leitrim Wetland;
 - That part of Area A east of the western strip Area D and east of the OMB-defined boundary of the Leitrim Wetland.
- Area D that is destined to be a small park adjacent to the buffer strip along Findlay Creek.

All should be zoned ES or, in the new comprehensive zoning bylaw terminology, EP or, if too small, OS.

The Provincial Policy Statement and the City's Official Plan make it clear that provincially significant wetlands and ecologically important woodlands are to be preserved (OP 2.4.2 among others) and that development is to proceed with principles such as "Designing with Nature" in mind. The subdivision plan approved by PEC in June 2006 did nothing to uphold these principles. The fact that the OMB required a re-drawing of the wetland boundary in no way changes scientific fact: provincially significant wetland is being turned into subdivisions. The city should be working to preserve these lands, demonstrating leadership by championing its own policies and the vision outlined in the 20/20 documents and the Official Plan.

Surely Agenda Item 3, a motion referred to you from Council – *resolving that growth in the Riverside South and Leitrim areas be limited to that which can be accommodated using the road network without the benefit of rapid transit* should have applied here? You had an opportunity to limit further urban sprawl, help reduce greenhouse gases by conserving wetland parcels that take up carbon dioxide and reducing the number of cars on the road.

The Leitrim Wetland may be habitat for a Nationally and Provincially Threatened species – Blandings Turtle. The federal Environmental Assessment for the LRT notes that "The Albion Road (Leitrim) Wetland also has potential to serve as suitable [Blandings] habitat". That statement only adds to the rationale for not allowing a re-zoning of the lands about which we are expressing concern.

A second point that we wish to make is that we find it difficult to understand why the staff report does not mention that part of the area to be rezoned is an Urban Natural Area (No. 108). You may chose to re-zone it out of existence, but the City should at least acknowledge its existence and passing.

Thirdly, it appears from the subdivision plan and from the Zoning proposal that the City intends either to gift or to sell the unopened road allowance along Blais Road west of Bank St to the developer. If that happens, the city will have lost an opportunity for a marvelous tree-lined hiking trail or bike path that could run from Bank to Albion and be part of the Rural Pathways project.

Back in June and then again in September 2006 when I appeared before you to express the Advisory Committee's concerns about the impact of the development on the wetland and UNA No 108, you instructed me to meet with the developer's representative and city staff, on site, to walk that part of UNA that is considered the most ecologically important.

That meeting took place on November 21 and the end result is that the Tartan Corporation will not agree to any measures to save the bottomlands identified adjacent to the Findlay Creek channel. "*Plans are too far advanced.*" Zoning the small park area (Area D) at the western end of the bottomlands we identified as a priority for preservation, will not likely result in any old forest being saved as the grade must be changed to meet the inevitable grade changes being made further south. However, Parks and Recreation staff will do what they can to save as many trees as possible.

In regards to the UNA 108 report, a number of us think that the Low ranking given by the consultant is incorrect. We noted in June (13th) that the UNA report did not accord with a plant species list given to the City by Albert Dugal and that the report does not reflect the diversity of sub-habitats in the area. While the report indicates that his data were used, it did not use his entire plant list. The UNA 108 report indicates 73 species of plants while the Dugal report lists 161 species (a difference of 88 species).

There are other errors in the report, including the fact that the consultant does not mention the occurrence of many large trees and fails to note 6 species of trees, many of them large specimens.

Furthermore, the Dugal list notes the presence of 21 Regionally Significant and Regionally Uncommon plants while the UNA report notes the presence of only 1 (in the table but the text says there are 3).

Clearly the UNA 108 report is deficient and if it were better, perhaps the City might have taken note and tried to save at least some of UNA, the small portion of land between the old creek bed and the "new" channelized bed. We recommend that along with a halt to the re-zoning process, that a new evaluation of the still extant parts of UNA be made. Then, if its ranking rises to Moderate, negotiations should begin in regard to its preservation.

We continue to express our concern about the long-term fate of the Leitrim wetland. The underlying peat must be removed for construction to proceed. Peat will be replaced by gravel, crushed rock and other fill. Will water then flow more freely from the wetland through the fill and under the houses, thereby slowly draining the wetland?

In summary, the OFGAC recommends 1) that you not add another nail in the coffin of one of Ottawa's (former) major sites of biodiversity and ecological importance. Give environmental protection zoning to

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2) Require another evaluation of the remaining part of UNA – an evaluation that takes into account the full range of plant species present.

3) Convince the Tartan Corporation to allow scientists with knowledge of Blandings Turtle access to the wetland areas to determine if suitable habitat does exist there and to determine if there is a population of turtles there.

4) We further recommend that the unopened road allowance along Blais Road to the west of Bank Street be kept in public ownership and maintained as a bike/walking trail as a potential part of the Rural Pathway System.

Iola Price
 Chair
 Ottawa Forests and Greenspace Advisory Committee
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