

**Report to
Rapport au:**

**Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee / Comité de l'agriculture et des affaires
rurales**

May 7, 2015 / 7 mai 2015

and Council / et au Conseil

May 13, 2015 / 13 mai 2015

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Submitted by

Soumis par:

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Ward: CITY WIDE / À L'ÉCHELLE DE LA VILLE File Number: ACS2015-PAI-PGM-0079

**SUBJECT: Land Evaluation and Area Review Update and the Ottawa Soils
Mapping Project**

**OBJET: Mise à jour sur l'évaluation des terres et l'examen des zones et
Projet de cartographie des sols agricoles d'Ottawa**

REPORT RECOMMENDATION

That Council approve the revised Terms of Reference, attached as Document 1, for the re-engagement of the Land Evaluation and Area Review (LEAR) Advisory Committee.

RECOMMANDATION DU RAPPORT

Que le Conseil approuve le mandat révisé, ci-joint comme document 1, pour la reformation du Comité consultatif sur l'évaluation des terres et l'examen des zones.

DISCUSSION

A Land Evaluation and Area Review (LEAR) is a tool to allow a municipality a method to objectively and consistently identify land that will meet the Provincial test for inclusion as part of a prime agricultural area. The Provincial Policy Statement requires that municipalities protect prime agricultural areas for future agricultural use. The first LEAR for Ottawa was undertaken in 1997 by the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton (RMOC). At that time, the RMOC was one of only a handful of municipalities that was adopting this new method to identify prime agricultural areas.

In 2009, staff were directed by Council to undertake a review of the City's LEAR mapping prior to the next Comprehensive Review of the Official Plan. This review was anticipated by Council to be undertaken by 2014.

LEAR Started

Staff formed a new LEAR Advisory Committee, as recommended by the Provincial LEAR guidelines and began the process to update LEAR at the end of 2010. The City also had just received the updated Soil Capability for Agriculture Mapping data from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA). However, in early 2013, staff reported back to Council that the review of the City's LEAR could not be completed due to a lack of confidence in the digital mapping provided by the Province. Council directed staff to work with OMAFRA to resolve the soil data issue and to then complete the LEAR and bring forward a stand-alone Official Plan amendment to implement the findings.

While the balance of the Official Plan review continued and was finally adopted by Council in December 2013, staff continued discussions with OMAFRA concerning an update of the digital soil capability for agriculture mapping for Ottawa.

Soil Capability Mapping Started

A pilot project was developed in early in 2014 to undertake soil testing in Ottawa. The Ottawa Soils Mapping Update, Phase 1 was initiated in July 2014 using two OMAFRA soils experts, a consultant pedologist recommended by OMAFRA and a City contract employee. The City's new high resolution land form mapping permitted more accurate mapping and supported a targeted sampling and analysis program. The project required access to farm land for the sampling and analysis of soil profiles. The sampling was undertaken through the summer and fall in two, nine square kilometre, pilot areas in North Gower and West Carleton.

The OMAFRA is still processing the soil samples but have confirmed that the Ottawa digital soils information received in 2010 has problems when compared to field results. The study team found undocumented soil types and a high proportion of the samples taken did not confirm the soil types identified in the digital mapping. However, they did confirm that the soil type boundaries identified in the mapping were generally good.

OMAFRA have suggested that additional sampling is required to test at least two additional sampling areas, east of the Rideau River, since the terrain and soil types are far different than those sampled in western Ottawa. With this second phase completed the OMAFRA will be in a position to determine whether or not it is possible to correct the digital soil capability mapping or if a more comprehensive sampling program is required.

OPA 150 Appealed

The inability of the City to update LEAR and to review the lands designated Agricultural Resource Area in the Official Plan forms the basis for some appeals to Official Plan Amendment 150. A number of those appellants were represented on the LEAR Advisory Committee which has not met since November, 2012. The LEAR Advisory Committee also has an interest in the Soil Mapping Project as it is critical to the completion of LEAR.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Staff are continuing to work with OMAFRA to develop the second phase of the soils mapping update but recognise that there is a role in this component of the project for the LEAR Advisory Committee. The committee can provide valuable advice and assistance in developing the work program and assisting to arrange access to land and promoting awareness of the soils mapping project.

The LEAR Advisory Committee is composed of representatives of the farming industry and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, representatives of the development industry, two Councillors (Moffatt and Blais), a representative of the OMAFRA, a consultant pedologist, and staff from the Planning and Growth Management Department including staff from the Rural Affairs Office.

Staff intend to contact the original members of the committee to determine their willingness to continue with the expanded mandate that includes the soils mapping update. Should a member of the committee not be able to continue, staff will seek a new member from the same organization or group with the objective that the same balance of representation is achieved.

Councillors Moffatt and Blais have both advised that that they are willing to continue to represent Council on this committee.

This report recommends a revised terms of reference for the LEAR Advisory Committee that includes the development of the work program for Phase 2 of the Ottawa Soil Mapping Update (see Document 1) and that staff invite previous members of the committee to continue in their role on that committee. Where members cannot continue, staff will bring a list of new members to Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee for approval.

This report also recommends that staff explore, with all members of the committee, opportunities to leverage landowner involvement to accelerate or expand the soil sampling work proposed for Phase 2 of the Soils Mapping Update.

RURAL IMPLICATIONS

This report has no direct impact on rural residents as it is intended establish a process that will include opportunities for public input before recommendations are made to Council.

CONSULTATION

No public consultation is required.

COMMENTS BY THE WARD COUNCILLORS

Councillors Moffatt and Blais have both advised that that they are willing to continue to represent Council on the LEAR Advisory Committee.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal impediments to adopting the recommendation outlined in this report. The recommendation seeks to fulfill a previous Council direction.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no risks identified with the recommendations of this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The City is responsible for the costs associated with meeting room rentals. Funds are available within Planning and Growth Management's operating budget.

ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS

There are no accessibility implications associated with the recommendation to this report.

TERM OF COUNCIL PRIORITIES

This project addresses the following Term of Council Priority:

ES3- Enhance and protect natural systems.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Document 1 LEAR Advisory Committee Terms of Reference

DISPOSITION

Staff of the Planning and Growth Management Department are directed to re-establish the former LEAR Advisory Committee and to involve that group in the development of the work plan for the next phase of the Ottawa Soil Mapping Update.

Document 1 – LEAR Review Advisory Committee Terms of Reference

LEAR ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Terms of Reference

DEFINITIONS

LEAR – Land Evaluation (LE) and Area Review (AR). The LE portion of LEAR provides a method of determining the importance of an area’s soil resources, based upon the Canada Land Inventory “Soil Capability Classification for Agriculture”, in terms of the suitability of the soils for agricultural use. The AR portion provides a method of identifying important factors, other than soils, that contribute to the suitability of an area for ongoing agricultural activities.

EU – Evaluation Unit is the spatial unit that will serve as the basis for data collection and the assessment of soil capability ratings.

MANDATE

The mandate of the LEAR Advisory Committee is to provide advice and specific expertise to Staff as part of the City’s review and updating of the LEAR system. The LEAR system is intended as a consistent means for identifying “prime agricultural areas” that will inform the ultimate staff review and recommendation on the Agricultural Resource Area designation boundary in the Official Plan. The LEAR will include updated background data the consideration of alternatives, and the selection of preferred LE and AR factors as well as the weighting of those factors.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership of the LEAR Advisory Committee shall consist of:

Voting members

- Two Councillors from the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee;
- Four active farmers, preferably one from each rural ward;
- One representative appointed by the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA);
- Four representatives of the development industry.

Non-voting members

- One representative of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs,
- Two staff members of Planning and Growth Management Department;
- One staff member Rural Affairs Office.

MEETINGS and QUORUM

The committee will appoint a Chair who will convene meetings and oversee their orderly conduct. The Chair's vote will decide a tied vote of the members on any matter. At the first meeting the committee will determine how decisions will be made.

Quorum for voting

- Committee Chair
- Two farmers or one farmer and the OFA representative
- Two representatives of the development industry

RECORD OF MEETINGS

Staff will provide a summary of all committee discussions, votes and any resulting action items. Meeting notes will be distributed to the committee in draft form after each meeting. Following a stated period for review and comment for accuracy purposes, all minutes will be filed with the project records.

GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES

The LEAR Advisory Committee shall:

1. Determine and document the purpose of the LE and AR systems having regard to the provincial goal of protecting "prime agricultural areas."
2. Define the Study Area for the LE and AR components.
3. Identify the appropriate Evaluation Unit (EU).
4. Select and clearly document the reasons for the choice of factors for evaluation.
5. Collect and analyse data for the LE and AR factors and selection and provide justification for the weighting of the AR factors.

6. Compile the scoring for LE and AR factors for each Evaluation Unit (EU).
7. Compile and map results for the study area.

The Advisory Committee will also:

- provide a resource in the form of local knowledge to confirm the accuracy of the LEAR scoring of individual parcels of land with the on-ground reality of the agricultural capability of those parcels;
- assist in the identification of any issues related to the ultimate staff recommendations with respect to the Agricultural Resource Area boundary but will not be responsible for determining that boundary;

LEAR DELIVERABLES

The results of the committee's work will be compiled by staff to produce a document titled "The City of Ottawa Land Evaluation and Area Review for Agriculture (LEAR)" for approval by City Council. This new document will replace the current "Ottawa-Carleton Land Evaluation and Area Review for Agriculture" as a guide to reviewing agricultural land.

Once the Ottawa Soil Mapping Update is completed staff will produce a digital map showing the scoring or scoring range of each Evaluation Unit within the LEAR study area. This map will be reviewed by the LEAR Advisory Committee before staff recommends this mapping to Council as the basis for the review of the Agricultural Resource Area in the City's Official Plan.

GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES OTTAWA SOILS MAPPING

The LEAR Advisory Committee shall:

1. Review draft work program for phase two soils sampling.
2. Provide input into prioritization of sampling areas.
3. Provide local contact and assist where possible to promote access to properties and within the local farming community and other rural land owners.
4. Review promotional material from the City.

5. Monitor progress of field and lab work.

RESOURCES AND BUDGET

The City will be responsible for the costs of meeting room rentals. All members will serve on a voluntary basis.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

- Communications outside of meetings will be conducted via email wherever possible to provide a record for all members;
- Meetings will be held during the day, whenever possible, and at a mutually agreeable location;
- Shared information including plans, maps, air photos, and correspondence will be stored at the City of Ottawa, 110 Laurier Avenue West;
- While it is understood that all members may not be able to attend all meetings, attendance is encouraged and any decisions will be made by those in attendance where there is a quorum.