

City to Create Ecological Reserve Zone on Despard Avenue

At the September 20 meeting, Council unanimously approved a resolution which will ensure an area on Despard Avenue identified in the WSP Canada report, is protected and that this information be included in future City plans. The resolution is as follows:

That staff be directed to work with the Ministry of Environment to properly classify the area and document its ecological values and enter into a joint covenant, which prohibits disturbance of the Blue Listed ecological features without prior approval from the Ministry and Council and that the area be added to a newly created Ecological Reserve Zone that provides regulations to protect the environmental values identified on the property and balance appropriate public access for passive recreational purposes.

There have been misunderstandings about the exact location of the site and status of the lands. The area where this ecological feature was identified is currently fee simple lands, not within a park, not affected by any covenant, not protected in trust with an agreement with a First Nation or any other party. This is not the wetland feature already mapped and identified 400 metres northwest of the area.

For phase 1 of the feasibility study, the Despard Avenue location was initially chosen as a test site for conceptual design purposes. Council stated it would not pursue this site if there were technical reasons which precluded the site from being developed for the intended purpose or if the costs to remediate the site were expected to be onerous. Following assessments completed by WSP Canada in 2020 and earlier this year, Council agreed the Despard site is no longer a consideration for the multiplex project location. About \$70,000 was spent from the \$125,000 allocated to the full technical analysis. The balance of this grant money will be reassigned to studying alternative sites.

QUOTE – Mayor Ed Mayne

“It is important to note the site was chosen based on multiple planning criteria and preliminary independent technical reports which stated the site was feasible but required additional study to confirm constraints. Council voted to investigate the site fully to determine suitability, before committing residents to potentially paying millions of dollars for the acquisition of a new site. Council used grant funds to undertake the detailed analysis and regardless of whether the site was suitable for the pool facility, the technical information is valuable as this and future Councils prepare long-term plans for public lands.”

###

For more information:

Deb Tardiff, Manager of Communications
dtardiff@parksville.ca; 250 954-3073