

INFORMATION REPORT

To: Mayor Strathdee and Members of Council

Prepared by: Jed Kelly, Director of Public Works

Date of Meeting: 13 March 2018

Subject: **PW 14-2018 Sparling Bush Management Update**

INFORMATION

To provide an update to Council regarding the progress made on action items established in 2017 to help preserve and manage the Sparling Bush woodlot.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT PW 14-2018 Sparling Bush Management Update be received for information.

BACKGROUND

On June 20, 2017, PW 34-2017, Sparling Bush Management and Information report was presented to the Strategic Priorities Committee. This report outlined the history of Sparling Bush and identified several critical issues that threaten the conservation of Sparling Bush. Those risks include encroachment, non-native invasive species, trail and tree management, and lack of signage. Additionally, the report proposed a schedule and budget to implement the recommendations provided by the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) and Town staff to preserve the bush. This schedule has acted as an action plan to ensure Sparling Bush remains a priority.

REPORT

Staff and stakeholders have made progress on action items scheduled for 2017 and 2018. They are as follows:

Public Information Campaign:

- A Sparling Bush Open House was held on October 26, 2017 – 25+ neighbors and stakeholders attended.
- General feedback was positive with further recommendations and information provided by attendees – there were requests for seating areas that could be used as outdoor classrooms.
- A “Living with Natural Areas: Sparling Bush” newsletter was distributed by mail and in person to Sparling Bush neighbors before the meeting, it was also posted online. The newsletter outlines the approved uses of the bush, and ways neighbors can help preserve the bush.

Sparling Bush Trail Entry Signage:

UTRCA’s 2015 report identified that there are more walking trails than necessary in Sparling Bush. Many of these trails are coming from unauthorized entry points on private land.

- Staff has engaged with the Rotary Club of St. Marys in regards to the installation and design of entrance signs to define designated entry points better, hoping to prevent user made trails.

- Signs will be installed at two locations: the Waterloo St. and Cemetery entrances. The signs will feature the Rotary Club logo, the name of the bush, and a statement acknowledging the Club's support of the bush.
- A proof of the proposed sign from Signs Ontario is attached (See Attachment A).
- Installation is expected spring of 2018.

Information Signage:

It has also been identified that signage outlining permitted uses of the bush, along with the history of the bush, species and trail locations should also be installed at a Sparling Bush entry point.

- Collaborating with UTRCA, staff are working on a design and determining what information should be conveyed.
- Locations and number of signs are to be determined.
- Existing Sparling Bush reserve could be used to fund the information signage installation.
- Future report to council regarding information signage would be required pending receipt of design proofs.

Augmentation of Bush:

- For continued internal growth of the bush, ongoing augmentation is required. The Rotary Club has committed \$3,000 to the augmentation of the bush, this will translate to approximately 150 additional trees.
- UTRCA will also likely suggest TD Tree Days funding to assist with the augmentation.
- UTRCA will be determining the appropriate native species to be planted.
- Staff has determined the planting areas (See Attachment B).
- Currently anticipating to plant in early spring - reaching out to local elementary schools to assist with planting.

Survey & Boundary Markers:

- Staff will initiate a survey in the spring, the survey will help determine property lines and the extent of neighbor encroachment.
- Future report to council with survey results and proposed marker design pending 2018 Capital Budget approval.

SUMMARY & IMPLICATIONS

Staff, Rotary Club of St. Marys, and the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority have been coordinating to ensure the action items identified in 2017 are accomplished. Progress has been made on numerous projects, all of which will help preserve the health of the bush while also encouraging the growth of the woodlot.

STRATEGIC PLAN

- ☒ This initiative is supported by the following priorities, outcomes, and tactics in the Plan.
 - Pillar #4 Culture and Recreation: Strategic Priority for "A Focused Parks Strategy"
 - Outcome: St. Marys' parks are not only a prized asset, they are also a natural gathering place that can be optimized and incorporated into enhancing the cultural profile of St. Marys.
 - Tactic(s): Investigate implementing a Forestry and Tree Management policy for the Town.

OTHERS CONSULTED

Vanni Azzano, Upper Thames River Conservation Authority
Ron Aikten, Rotary Club of St. Marys
Jonathon Hahn, Parks Team Leader
Morgan Dykstra, Public Works Coordinator

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A – Rotary Entry Signs Proof
Attachment B – Bush Augmentation Locations
Attachment C – Living with Natural Areas

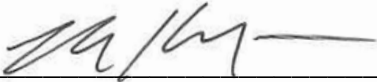
REVIEWED BY

Recommended by the Department



Jed Kelly
Director of Public Works

Recommended by the CAO



Brent Kittmer
CAO / Clerk