

STAFF REPORT: Recreation



REPORT TO: Recreation Committee
MEETING DATE: August 28, 2008
REPORT NO.: DOR 08 44
SUBJECT: Land acquisition – Heathcote Parkland and Beaver River Access

PREPARED BY: S. Everitt, Director of Recreation

A. Recommendations

THAT the Recreation Committee receive report DOR 08 44 “Land Acquisition – Heathcote Parkland and Beaver River Access” for information purposes.

B. Background

That Council did authorize to jointly purchase Lot 23, Concession 12 (Roll No. 42-42-000-014-030-00), being a 9 acre parcel of land on August 18, 2008; based on the following:

- purchase price of \$115,000.00
- \$57,500.00 from Town Parkland Reserve
- \$57,500.00 from the Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy
- Ownership and Management of entire property to be in the name of the Town/Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy.
- Normal Title Search required.

That Council agrees to this purchase based on the 50/50 joint ownership between the Town and the Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy.

The Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy has an accepted offer, conditional on financing to purchase Lot 23, Concession 12. The financing condition must be waived by August 30, 2008. The financing condition is based on the funding support from the Town and without this funding the financing condition will not be waived; therefore the purchase would not be completed.

A request was received from Robert Barnett of the Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy that would form a partnership to acquire the above noted property for parkland use.

The Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy is a charitable organization and was established to preserve the landscape, ecology and wildlife of the Niagara Escarpment by developing and managing a system of natural reserves on which only ecologically sustainable recreational activities would be permitted. The Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy achieves their goal by:

- Land acquisition through purchase or donation
- Establishing conservation agreements
- Fundraising for the above

This property would offer the Town a variety of Benefits. The 9 acres of Parkland would add significant useable frontage along the Beaver River adjacent to the Heathcote Pioneer Cemetery and would increase the overall land area to 10.25 acres as well as give the Town the opportunity to develop a significant Gateway feature on Grey County Road 13. The property would provide users of the Beaver River a safe and accessible point of entry or exit to the Beaver River and provide a much needed staging area that would allow vehicles and pedestrians to safely stage off County Road 13.

The property could also provide an alternative location for the construction of a new Heathcote Hall which would need to be determined if it was a feasible project. The Heathcote Hall Board of Management are not aware of this land deal. However the Heathcote Board of Management is actively determining the feasibility of the project at its current location. The future use of the current Heathcote Hall property has been discussed with the adjacent and original landowner, who believes that the land reverts back to their ownership. An Agreement dated October 25, 1978 with the original landowner and the former Collingwood Township states that the land is conveyed for the purpose of maintaining a village or community Hall, and should it at any time cease to be used for this purpose, for the term of two years, then the land together with all appurtenances shall revert to the grantor, his heirs and assigns. Any future use of this property would also require purchase of additional lands to for adequate parking to allow users and staging to park off of County Road 13.

The elements of potential land purchase agreements for Lot 23, Concession 12 are as follows

Option A

- Land be purchased Jointly by the Town of The Blue Mountains and Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy with \$57,500.00 from Town Parkland Acquisition fund, and the remaining \$57,500.00 and legal fees be paid by the Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy;
- The land be owned jointly by the Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy and the Town;
- The Town may construct a building for community gathering purposes or pavilion at a later date if so desired;
- The development of this Parkland will maintain its nature vegetation and wildlife habitat, interpretive signage will provide an education

component. A parking lot with a 10 to 15 car capacity that will allow safe parking off of Grey Road 13 for parkland visitors as well as a staging point for access to and from the Beaver River.

- The Town will develop a Gateway Feature that will compliment the lands Natural Park feature and the promotion of Partnership with the Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy and Town being a key aspect of that gateway;
- The property maintenance and waste collection will be the responsibility of the Town;

Option B

- Land be purchased by the Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy with \$57,500.00 from Town Parkland Acquisition fund, and the remaining \$57,500.00 and legal fees be paid by the Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy;
- As part of the agreement the land be put on covenant as we own the adjacent land and that right of first refusal be offered to the Town;
- The Town may construct a building for community gathering purposes or pavilion at a later date if so desired;
- The development of this Parkland will maintain its nature vegetation and wildlife habitat, interpretive signage will provide an education component. A parking lot with a 10 to 15 car capacity that will allow safe parking off of Grey Road 13 for parkland visitors as well as a staging point for access to and from the Beaver River.
- The Town will develop a Gateway Feature that will compliment the lands Natural Park feature and the promotion of Partnership with Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy and Town being a key aspect of that gateway;
- The property maintenance and waste collection will be the responsibility of the Town;

Staff is recommending that Option "A" be the basis for the purchase and ownership agreement.

Property Description

The property has an Official Plan Designation of Rural and is zoned "A1-Rural" and includes the following:

- 9 Acre total property
- 2 Acre building parcel
- 7 Acre Hazard

Grey Sauble Conservation Authority Planning reports that the proposed use as a 2 acre Building Parcel and 7 acre hazard complies with the current zoning, and

does not appear to present a conformity problem with the recently approved Official Plan.

Grey Sauble Conservation Authority has provided staff the following information;

- Property has engineered flood lines
- Municipal Official Plan notes EP and Hazard
- Drainage constraints
- A portion of the river bank is actively eroding as it flows towards Heathcote
- Beaver River is a significant fishery
- File recommendations are made for a building parcel
- Property will require lot grading, drainage, and site evaluation study
- North East corner of the property may be suitable for building
- New Driveway should be constructed outside the hazard zone
- Maintain and enhance vegetative cover in hazard zone

The 2006 Leisure Activities Plan also highlights acquisition of properties of this nature and the use of Partnerships as ways to increase the Towns' Parkland. The following is the Action Plan that supports acquisition;

Action Plan

Guiding Principle #1 – Building Healthy Communities

- 1.2 Should any public or private lands belonging in the parks and recreation base become available, the Town should explore acquisition and partnership options to ensure that it remains as part of the leisure inventory.

Guiding Principles #2 – Natural Amenities

- 2.2 Where appropriate, the Town should proactively add parkland to its existing supply through a variety of means using traditional (e.g. purchase, dedications, etc.) and alternative (e.g. bonusing incentives, tax exemptions, easements, land exchanges, etc.) acquisition options.
- 2.3 Develop waterfront trails that showcase the exceptional aesthetic value of Nottawasaga and/or rivers contained within the Town.

Guiding Principles #4 - Connectivity

- 4.6 Encourage the development of shoreline and riverfront trails that tie into the existing trail network and provide a physical connection between the waterfront facilities and the rest of the Town's leisure assets.

Guiding Principles #5 - Partnerships

- 5.2 Explore ongoing partnership opportunities with any potential partners and apply the partnership framework to the Town's existing relationships with traditional and non-traditional partners.

Guiding Principles #7 - Infrastructure

- 7.3 Decommission/demolish the Heathcote Community Hall and explore alternative uses for the site, such as a parking area for canoe users accessing the Beaver River.
- 7.32 Acquisition of shoreline property through a variety of means to increase access to waterfront opportunities is recommended, particularly sites with beaches and proximity to the Craigleith Area.

C. The Blue Mountains' Strategic Plan

Preserving and enhancing natural and environmental features, and cultural heritage of the community

Supporting the development of social and recreational programs to meet the broad range of needs in the community

D. Budget Impact (cc: Treasury if required)

Purchase cost of Parkland

Purchase Price	\$115,000.00	Tax not included
Town of The Blue Mountain share	\$57,500.00	
Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy share	\$57,500.00	
Current Parkland acquisition fund balance	\$552,754.31	
2008 Parkland Acquisition revenue not yet transferred	\$108,000.00	
Total Remaining in Parkland Acquisition	\$603,254.00	

This funding scenario for purchase will result in no effect on the 2008 tax rate.

Development cost of Parkland to be included in 2009 Capital Budget

Parking Lot and entrance construction	\$35,000.00
Gateway Feature	\$20,000.00

Annual Operations and Maintenance

Staff and equipment time to maintain addition parkland property expected to be approximately \$2500.00 per year

E. Environmental Impacts

The Town Partnering with the Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy a strong commitment ensures the protection of wetlands and wildlife habitat while providing future educational and gateway features.

F. Attached (Relevant documentation not personal information about an identifiable person)

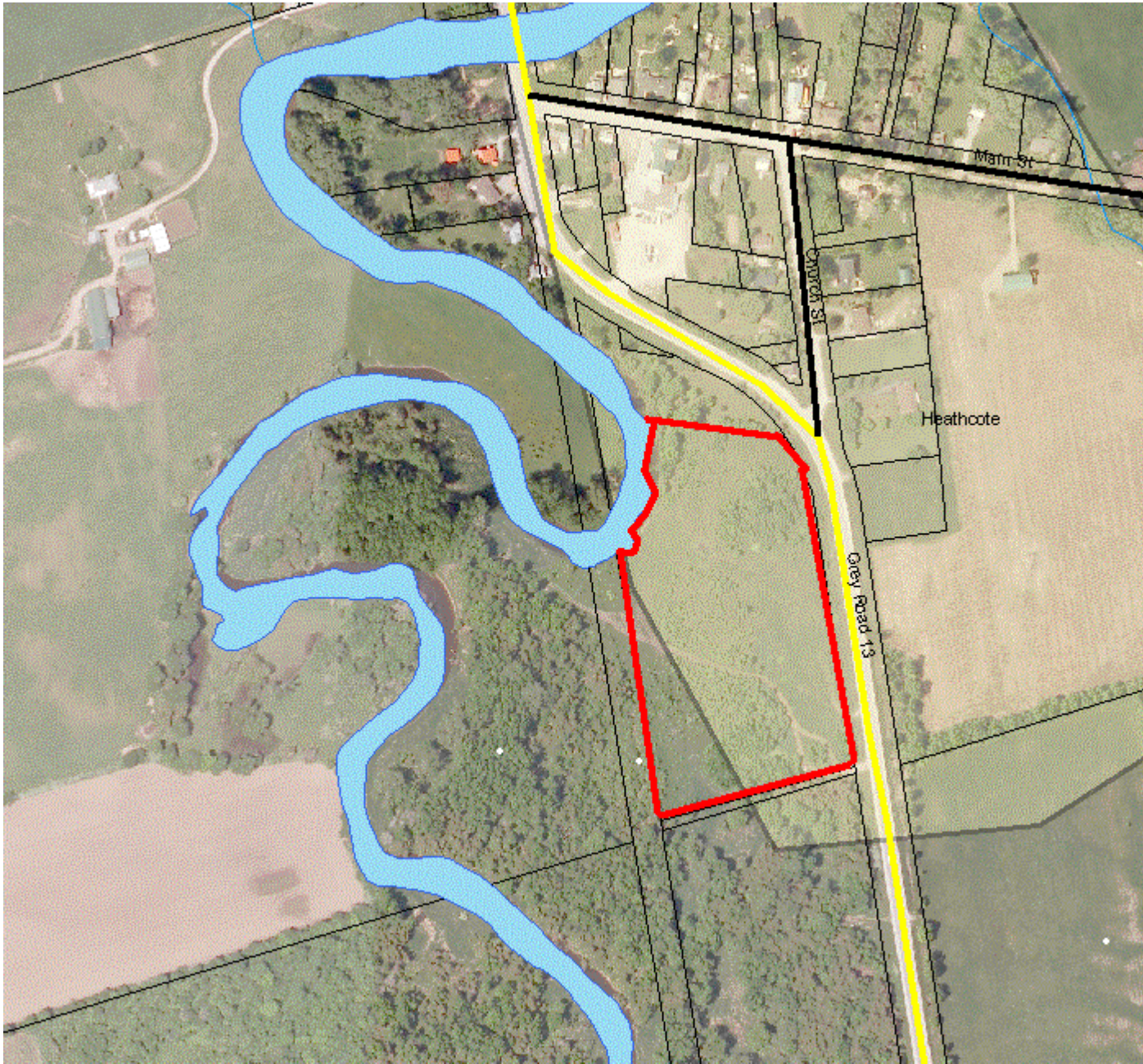
1. Location Map
2. Neighbouring property mapping
3. Grey Sauble Report and map Site Plan
4. Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy website information

Respectfully submitted,

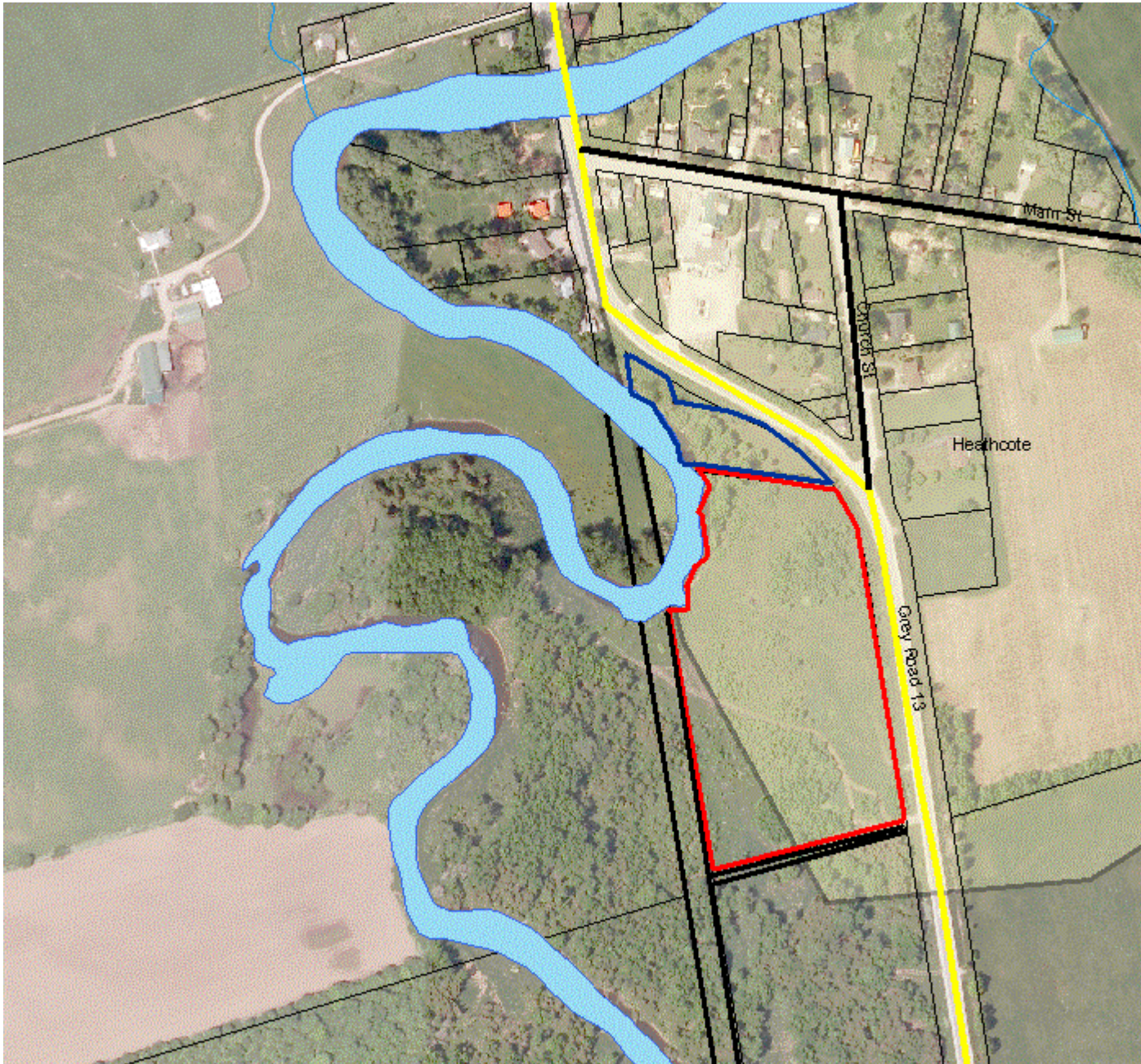
Shawn Everitt
Director of Recreation

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Attachment 1



Attachment 2



Legend

- Red area is proposed purchased property
- Blue area is existing Town Owned Property Heathcote Pioneer Cemetery
- Black area is existing unopened road allowances