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| TO: | CHAIR AND MEMBERS COMMUNITY & PROTECTIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE MARCH 24 2015 |
| FROM: | WILLIAM C. COXHEAD MANAGING DIRECTOR of PARKS & RECREATION |
| SUBJECT: | TRANSFER OF FARM ANIMALS FROM STORYBOOK GARDENS AND GO-FORWARD BUSINESS STRATEGY |

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| RECOMMENDATION |
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That, on the recommendation of the Managing Director of Parks & Recreation, the following actions **BE TAKEN** with respect to Storybook Gardens:

- a. **NO ACTION** be taken to replace the Storybook Barn destroyed by fire;
- b. Storybook Garden farm animals **BE TRANSFERED** to suitable facilities that can provide appropriate care and lifelong homes;
- c. That the ownership of the farm animals **BE TRANSFERRED** to the receiving facilities;
- d. That new features and attractions **BE IMPLEMENTED** that provide value to the park visitor's experience and that adhere to the core themes of Storybook Gardens of *interactive play, emergent literacy, and connection to the natural world*;
- e. That the proceeds from the insurance claim **BE USED** as the source of financing for the new features and attractions.

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| PREVIOUS REPORTS PERTINENT TO THIS MATTER |
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| February 18, 2015 | 2 nd Report of the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee - Community and Protective Services Committee (CPSC) |
| January 23, 2012 | Storybook Gardens Business Plan Update – Zoo Animal Transfer to Other Facilities – Community and Neighbourhoods Committee |

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| BACKGROUND |
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Purpose

The purpose of this report is to inform Council of the planned actions to be taken by Administration following the destruction of the Storybook Gardens barn including what happens to the animals and the plans to replace that feature with new features and attractions.

On February 3rd, 2015, the barn at Storybook Gardens was destroyed by fire. The cause of the fire is undetermined. At the time of the fire the barn was home to a small number and variety of domestic farm animals, including miniature donkeys, goats, sheep, rabbits, and chickens. Fortunately the animals were safely removed from the building and were transferred to a nearby farm where they are currently residing, under the care of the farm owners.

The Storybook barn was an original structure, built when the park was first opened in 1958. In the years that followed the barn housed a wide variety of domestic and exotic animals and served as the base of operations for the Storybook Gardens animal care staff. Following renovations in 2003, visitors were allowed access into the barn to see the animals; since 2003 the barn has housed only domestic farm animals, and these animals are the only remaining exhibit animals at Storybook Gardens following the closure of the zoo in 2012.



Park visitors generally enjoyed seeing the live animals, and animals have a long history at Storybook Gardens. Nevertheless, for the majority of park visitors the amount of time spent at the barn and with the animals was typically a very small percentage of their length of stay. Visits to the barn frequently ranged from five to ten minutes, of an overall length of stay during the peak summer season of three to five hours.

During the 2012 summer season extensive surveying was done with visitors to the park. One open-ended question asked was “What made you come to Storybook Gardens today?” In total, 5 out of 3,590 total responses cited “visiting the animals” as their main reason for visiting the park.

Recommendation:

In addition the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, noting the loss of the barn, has requested that the City consider the discontinuation of animal displays at Storybook Gardens.

It is with all the forgoing in mind that Administration recommends that the barn not be replaced and that the farm animals be rehomed.

Suitable homes for displaced farm animals.

Animal transfers are to be arranged as soon as suitable new homes are identified for the animals, according to the following criteria:

1. Provide a suitable living place for the animals to live in safe, healthy enclosures designed for the unique needs of the particular species;
2. Be able to accept and house all of the animals of that species so that the existing groups can be maintained for the comfort and wellbeing of the animals, and;
3. Commit to providing lifelong homes and care for the animals, with humane euthanasia only considered at the end of an animal’s natural life as a means to end suffering.

Loss of barn leads to new opportunities:

The Replacement Cost Value of the barn has been set at \$226,000, plus the amount for replacement of barn contents. This amount would be received if the barn is rebuilt, or if a different building is constructed onsite that has a project budget equal to or exceeding this amount. The Actual Cash Value of the lost barn as determined by our insurance provider is 162,532.00.

While the Replacement Cost Value is substantially more money than the Actual Cash Value, a requirement to allocate the entire amount on a new building presents additional challenges that make it the less desirable direction to pursue. A building for public occupancy built to today’s code and standards within the available budget would result in a structure in the range of 900 to 1,100 square feet, which is insufficient and only able to accommodate a small percentage of visitors for activity on a typical day. Furnishing and equipment for this small building would also be required and there is no funding for it if a new build was contemplated. As such we will not be replacing the barn with a new building.

The barns unexpected loss, while unfortunate from a historical perspective, does create an opportunity to introduce new features and attractions that will help the park remain relevant and attractive to young families and are more aligned with the *core themes* of Storybook Gardens (*interactive play, emergent literacy, and connection to the natural world*) and the guiding principles of Parks and Recreation (*accessible and affordable, quality of service, quality infrastructure, adaptable and flexible, and accountable*). New attractions will not include the reintroduction of animals.

The Actual Cash Value, while a reduced amount, provides the flexibility to move forward with a variety of features and attractions that will better fit the planning parameters and that will better serve the needs of a greater number of visitors than would the construction of a single new building.

Our go forward strategy is to create/add new features and attractions in alignment with the core themes and guiding principles. Any new attractions or features considered for the park will serve to:

- enhance the Storybook environment
- provide an amazing experience for the target age group of children up to age 10
- be suitable for three-season or year-round use

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- attract new visitors and/or enhance the visitor experience
- have a high value for repeat visitation
- generate additional revenue and or decrease expenses

Staff are currently evaluating best options for new attractions for implementation in the near and mid term. The introduction of new features or attractions will be scheduled and implemented with attention to the park’s operating schedule so as to minimize disruption of the experience for park visitors while introducing new elements in a timely way.

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| FINANCIAL IMPACT |
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Funding for the transfer of animals to new homes will come from the 2015 approved Storybook Gardens operations budget.

The Actual Cash Value of the lost barn as determined by our insurance provider is 162,532.00 and an additional \$15,000-20,000 yet to be determined from barn contents insurance will be the source of financing for the features and attractions.

Additional operating dollars will not be required to support the new features and attractions as a reprioritization and reassignment of costs will occur within the existing budget allotment.

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| CONCLUSION |
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While the loss of the historic barn is unfortunate, the proceeds from the insurance claim now allow Storybook Gardens to add new features and attractions that will sustain and increase visitation by adding to the quality of the experience. There are sufficient resources to apply to achieve these changes. Every effort will be made to introduce new features in a timely way which will allow for Storybook Gardens to recover from this loss in a way that meets the expectations of park patrons now and into the future.

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