



INPUT FROM ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Name of Advisory Committee

Environmental and Ecological Planning Advisory Committee (**EEPAC**)

Mandate of Advisory Committee

The Environmental and Ecological Planning Advisory Committee reports to the Municipal Council, through the Planning and Environment Committee. The Environmental and Ecological Planning Advisory Committee provides technical advice to the City of London on matters which are relevant to the City of London's Official Plan, including London's natural heritage systems as it relates to Environmentally Significant Areas, woodlands, stream corridors, etc.

What areas of the 2016 – 2019 multi-year budget are most important to your committee?

Protection and enhancement of London's Natural Heritage System. Funding is found in the Parks and Urban Forestry sections of the operating and capital budgets.

Do you have any comments about how your priorities are addressed in the base budget?

OPERATING BUDGET

ESA Management Contract (purchased services, page 93).

The Coves has been added to the management contract with the UTRCA. Eight of 10 city owned ESA lands have some management. Not included in the contract is a section of the Stanton Stream corridor (see below), the newly identified Pottersburg Valley ESA (which does have \$50K budgeted for capital in 2016) and the City owned portions of the Lower Dingman Corridor ESA (see second air photo). It is not clear what additional service (30 h /yr shown on page 123) will be added and where the service will be added. EEPAC points out that in 2014, \$72K was cut from this budget which reduced the UTRCA management team complement by one. On a related note, EEPAC notes that there are no additional staff budgeted for by law enforcement which is one way encroachments in ESAs are handled. Again, this is really a net decrease in service level given the increase of lands in City ownership and management and the number of people living adjacent to natural areas. In addition to the staff plan to mail "Living With Natural Areas" to all owners abutting an ESA, EEPAC has a recommendation:

The 2016-19 service adjustment proposed in the Animal Services base operating budget (p. 140) include ESAs in the service proposed. There was a 2015 pilot under Parks Patrol and Proactive enforcement, where Animal Control Officers monitored bike accessible parks, off leash parks and city bike paths.

On a related note, I have been before PEC to discuss the lack of management or inventory for the Lower Dingman Corridor ESA. EEPAC notes that in the 2019 growth capital plan, there is \$450K for the Dingman Creek Trail. EEPAC remains concerned that if recreational amenities precede the management of the adjacent natural features and functions, there will be problems such as inappropriate trail locations, erosion and encroachment as experienced in other parts of the city where infrastructure and development precede management. Prevention is less expensive.

Invasive Species Management

EEPAC recommends:

A one-time diversion of the contribution to the Woodland Acquisition Fund (up to \$262K) to deal with invasive species management in ESAs. Alternatively, Council consider a 4 year diversion of half of the contribution. (see Detailed Budget pp. 547 and 555)

At its January EEPAC meeting, Mr. Macpherson indicated that roughly \$70K has been spent and that “a million” might be necessary. The new public enemy #1 is Phragmites (see photo following). Even little St. Thomas is making an effort to deal with this menace.
<http://www.stthomastimesjournal.com/2014/03/21/pov-the-problem-with-phragmites>

Public Information Centre - Invasive Phragmites Management Plan

The City of St. Thomas, in cooperation with Doug Tarry Limited and Dr. Janice Gilbert, has initiated the Invasive Phragmites Management Plan to identify a comprehensive plan to eradicate Phragmites beginning in the Lake Margaret Watershed. In January 2014 Council appointed a Phragmites Committee comprised of community members, City employees and a member of Council to work towards making the City of St Thomas a Phragmites free zone.



LIFECYCLE CAPITAL BUDGET

EEPAC is also concerned that despite an average addition of 30 hectares in city owned ESA lands each year, the lifecycle capital spending on ESAs is fixed at \$200K per year. This amount has been the same (with one exception) since 2012 (see following table). This is essentially a reduction particularly when there is an invasive species problem and significant recommendations contained in Conservation Master Plans.

The \$200K per year means a very slow implementation of the recommendations of the completed Conservation Master Plans (CMPs) such as for invasive species management in Westminster Ponds/Pond Mills ESA. The lion’s share of the meagre \$200K in 2016 and 2017 is for the Coves (\$50K in each year) and Westminster Ponds (\$100K in each year). However, this means little for the recommendations that will flow from the CMPs underway for the Medway Valley Heritage Forest ESA and for Meadowlily Woods ESA (\$50K in each of 2018 and 2019 for both of these). Our assumption is that some money from authorized projects in previous budgets remains available, but are concerned that the amounts are not sufficient.

Yr	Woodland Parks/Management	Major Open Space	Neighbourhood Park Infrastructure	ESAs	Street tree planting
2009	170	235	450	270	260
2010	140	320	430	280	260
2011	0	135	380	190	260
2012	150	70	450	200	260
2013	200	150	410	200	260
2014	150	220	400	200	211
2015	150	270	220	350	411
2016	100	350	180	200	411
2017	100	230	450	200	411
2018	100	450	500	200	411
2019	100	450	500	200	411

Less than \$1/person is in the capital budget each year for the protection and enhancement of the 10 City owned ESAs. Double is spent on street tree planting which is really just standing still as this budget is to “Replace trees on City boulevards due to age, hazard etc. and as requests are received.”

RECOMMENDATION: Council ask staff to review the life cycle capital budget for ESAs to determine the optimum level to achieve the objectives of Conservation Master Plans and the Official Plan. This could be achieved through zero based budgeting.

EEPAC notes some growth capital dollars are budgeted for new ESAs (\$400K over the multi-year budget). EEPAC remains concerned that it is insufficient, for example, to ensure trails are located away from sensitive ecological features and functions or areas of erosion.

GROWTH CAPITAL BUDGET

In 2017 Growth Capital – there is \$700K for “CPRI Link to Riverbend” (p. 313 Detailed Budget) and \$60K for CPRI ESA in 2018 (Detailed Budget p. 315). Map 4 of the draft London Plan shows ESA designation along the valley slope within the CPRI lands. The woodlot between the valley and CPRI buildings is shown as “Potential ESA”. The Thames Valley Corridor Plan shows two patches of “existing ESA” in this area. The Corridor Plan also shows a multi-use path through there. In all cases, there appears to be a gap between the Potential ESA and the ESA in the valley. Is this the case? If the city wishes to pursue this route, presumably it will carry out an Environmental Assessment that will identify and avoid these parts of the Natural Heritage System and will recommend ways to protect these parts of the Natural Heritage System from encroachment. While most people are respectful, when you increase the raw number of people, you also bring more of those people who are not respectful. EEPAC is unclear how the \$60,000 will be spent.

In addition to this \$60,000, there is another \$340K in the Growth Capital Budget (p. 315) for new ESAs over the 4 year budget, with another \$500K from 2020 to 2025. Most of this is for new ESAs identified in area plans. In other words, to be determined. Of this remaining \$340K, there is \$125K for Kain’s Woods ESA in the westerly portion of this ESA. EEPAC looks forward to being involved in the planning of how this money will be spent (and hopes that it will be added to the ESA management contract in a timely manner). Worrysome, EEPAC has seen preliminary subdivision planning for this area. It includes part of the paved TVP **within** part of this ESA. (There is \$780K budgeted for 2018 for the Norquay/Riverbend portion of the TVP on page 314). This appears to be incompatible with the objectives of the London Plan to protect and enhance the Natural Heritage System and past comments by members of Council during its last term while debate pavement in the Medway.



INPUT FROM ADVISORY COMMITTEES (cont'd)

Do you have any comments about how your priorities are addressed in the strategic initiatives section of the 2016-2019 multi-year budget?

Business Case #3 – Urban Forest Strategy

Tree planting on boulevards and parks. The strategic investment is to increase it by less than 8000 in total (2017 – 1150, 2018 – 2500, 2019 – 3850) over the 4 years above base case of 1600 per year. Much of the current budget is to replace lost ash trees. As well, EEPAC notes that it is the developers who plant trees in new subdivisions. Both the Urban Forest Strategy and the developers' tree planting are admirable. **However, there has been NO movement on a city wide tree cutting on private land by law.** How many more Teeple Terraces and 704/706 Boler Roads are we to see? The staff report notes it takes 30-40 years for a new tree to provide significant cover while a clear cut can remove hundreds of mature trees in a matter of days. The Urban Forest Strategy is more than just planting replacement trees and new trees. It is also about the retention of mature tree cover. Loss of canopy continues. EEPAC also notes that the draft London Plan includes this following section. It does not appear that the present base budget would allow Council to achieve this part of the London Plan.

Progress toward meeting these targets will be monitored as follows: A tree canopy cover analysis will be prepared every five years to determine if tree canopy targets are being achieved.

An analysis of the structure, function, and value of the Urban Forest will be prepared at least once every ten years.

An inventory update and analysis of trees in boulevards, rural streets, manicured portions of parks and municipal properties, will be completed at least once every ten years.

Business Case #4 - \$1.2 M for TVP

This project mentions a "West London Gap." EEPAC asks where this is located and what is the potential impact on the Natural Heritage System?

EEPAC has commented on this project through the Environmental Assessment. EEPAC disagrees with the commentary to the business case - the preferred alignment (even with the second bridge moved) brings much more activity near to Species At Risk.

Business Case - #17 – Winter Maintenance

EEPAC does not support winter maintenance on pathways in ESAs due to environmental impact of materials used (even if salt is not used) as well as the impact of increased activity when the ground is most sensitive. Big sloppy footsteps in mud break up and loosen soil making it more prone to washing away in melting snow and rain. If you go around mud, the trail gets wider, starting the cycle all over again.

Do you have any other comments from the Committee with respect to the budget?

Although outside our mandate, EEPAC would like to comment on the Goal of Building a Sustainable City. EEPAC would recommend that council include in its budget including in new building projects such as the new community centres in the SE and E and new library in the NW, that there be green walls and green roofs and if not green roofs, solar panels. Alternatively, there could be a dedicated budget all areas could draw from for initiatives such as butterfly gardens on under-utilized city property such as Reg Cooper Square.

There are many positives that the City can be proud of. These include having a Woodland Acquisition Fund, strong Official Plan Policies that survived challenges all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada, a technical advisory committee in EEPAC, two staff ecologists and a supportive City Council. Yet, we should strive to do more to increase funding to protect and enhance our Natural Heritage System.

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STANTON STREAM CORRIDOR (1) / DINGMAN CREEK CORRIDOR (2)

