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TO:	CHAIR AND MEMBERS COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE NOVEMBER 12, 2012
FROM:	JOHN M. FLEMING DIRECTOR OF LAND USE PLANNING & CITY PLANNER
SUBJECT:	WESTMINSTER WORKING GROUP – COMMUNITY CONNECTION

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the following report with an update and next steps regarding the feasibility of a community connection from Parliament Crescent to Commissioners Road East **BE RECEIVED** for information.

PREVIOUS REPORTS PERTINENT TO THIS MATTER
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May 29, 2012 Community Services Committee – Directed the Civic Administration to work with the Westminster Working Group to develop a proposal for a multiuse pathway from the Westminster neighbourhood to Commissioners Road and report back within 6 months.

BACKGROUND

In response to the request from the Westminster Working Group, City Council directed the matter to Civic Administration to work with the Westminster Working Group.

The Council Resolution of June 13, 2012:

That the Civic Administration BE DIRECTED to work with the Westminster Working Group to develop a proposal, and business case, for a multi-use pathway from the Westminster neighbourhood to Commissioners Road, and report back to the Community Services Committee (CSC) within six months; it being noted that a petition with approximately 200 signatures supporting this endeavour was submitted to the CSC (petition is available for viewing in the City Clerks' office); it being further noted that the CSC received a presentation from S. Sinclair, Westminster Working Group Member, with respect to this matter.

The desired community connection is through a portion of the Westminster Ponds / Pond Mills Environmentally Significant Area (ESA) therefore the process as outlined in the Council approved *Planning and Design Standards for Trails in Environmentally Significant Areas* document will be followed. Generally, Level 3 (multi-use asphalt) pathways are not part of the trail system within an ESA. The document also states that: *“In exceptional circumstances, Level 3 pathways may be constructed to provide access to a viewing platform or a cultural heritage feature or to maintain an existing connection among neighbourhoods where a safe alternative route outside of the ESA is not available”*. In such cases, it must be demonstrated that the pathway will not result in negative impact to the ecological features and functions of the ESA. This may (or may not be) demonstrated through the process depending on the outcome of the study which includes a current life science inventory, analysis and assessment of the existing natural area and the establishment of an Environmental Management Strategy that recommends Management Zones.

The results of a preliminary study and draft Management Zones by the City’s consultant indicate the proposed location for the community connection is in a Natural Area 2 Management Zone (over a former landfill) which permits Level 2 Pedestrian Trails (asphalt). In Spring / Summer 2013 the City’s consultant will provide additional ecological inventory and finalize the

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Management Zones for the northern portion of the ESA for the Community Connections project.

The Planning and Design Standards for Trails in ESAs document states that:

Trail planning must address a variety of issues such as existing community connections, existing infrastructure, or a proposed new trail route. These issues must be considered in the context of the ESA management zones and where they are located. In all cases an environmental planning process shall be followed that evaluates alternative trail options to arrive at a preferred solution, consistent with the intent of Official Plan policies 15.3.2, 15.3.3. and 15.4.1.4. This process shall include consultation with Environmental and Ecological Planning Advisory Committee (EEPAC), public participation meetings, and a public meeting before Planning Environment Committee.

Timeline for Westminster Ponds ESA – Community Connections Project

1. **June 13, 2012** Council Resolution directed staff to work with the Westminster Working Group to create community connections from Westminster (Parliament Crescent) to Commissioners Road East.
2. **June 27, 2012** Council resolved that the moratorium on use of asphalt trails in Environmentally Significant Areas (ESAs) be lifted, as the new *Planning and Design Standards for Trails in Environmentally Significant Areas* document will provide the direction for any use of asphalt in ESAs.
3. **September 25, 2012** received report from North South Environmental re: Westminster Ponds ESA / Dayus Creek Draft Management Zones as per the *Planning and Design Standards for Trails in Environmentally Significant Areas*.
4. **September 25, 2012** staff met with Westminster Working Group, Alana Dalby and Sean Sinclair.
5. **October 18th, 2012** Report from North South Environmental re: Westminster Ponds ESA / Dayus Creek Draft Management Zones went to EEPAC for comment.
6. **October 24, 2012** Community meeting with Westminster Ponds / Pond Mills ESA Team. Staff presentations included a community connections update.
7. **November 12, 2012** Report to Community Services Committee on Council Resolution of June 12, 2012.

Staff will meet with the Westminster Working Group in November 2012 to update them on next steps.

NEXT STEPS

November 2012 Staff to issue a Request for Proposal for a consultant to undertake the Natural Heritage Inventory, Evaluation and Management Strategy for The Westminster Ponds / Pond Mills Environmentally Significant Area.

Spring / Summer 2013 Consultant to provide the ecological inventory and finalize the Management Zones for the northern portion of the ESA for the Community Connections project as an early deliverable.

Summer 2013 If ecological inventory can support the project, staff will review the Draft Trail Options with EEPAC, Westminster Working Group and the Trails Advisory Group.

Early Fall 2013 Report to Planning and Environment Committee with staff recommendation.

Fall 2013 Plan for construction.

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Depending on the outcome of the process, additional funding may be required to implement the community connection.

PREPARED BY:	SUBMITTED BY:
LINDA MCDOUAGLL, MES, OALA ECOLOGIST PLANNER	ANDREW MACPHERSON, OALA MANAGER - PARKS PLANNING & DESIGN
RECOMMENDED BY:	
JOHN M. FLEMING, MCIP, RPP DIRECTOR OF LAND USE PLANNING & CITY PLANNER	