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| TO: | CHAIR AND MEMBERS COMMUNITY PROTECTIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING ON AUGUST 13, 2019 |
| FROM: | SCOTT STAFFORD MANAGING DIRECTOR, PARKS AND RECREATION |
| SUBJECT: | VIMY RIDGE PARK – PERMANENT PARK SITE DEFERRED MATTER 1 |

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| RECOMMENDATION |
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That, on the recommendation of the Managing Director, Parks & Recreation, the following actions **BE TAKEN** with respect to the selection of the permanent location for Vimy Ridge Park:

- a) Based on stakeholder consultations, the temporary Vimy Ridge Park site at the south-east corner of Hale Street and Trafalgar Street **BE CONFIRMED** as the permanent park location;
- b) That the 427 Wing RCAFA and other groups associated with various commemorations of the 100th anniversary of the historic battle of Vimy Ridge in April 1917 **BE THANKED** for their vision and efforts, and;
- c) That the City **PREPARE** a concept plan for enhancements to the permanent park site and seek further public input into the detailed design, prior to construction.

It being noted that funding was established by Council in 2017 to complete the basic requirements for enhancements to the permanent park site, once it was determined.

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| PREVIOUS REPORTS PERTINENT TO THIS MATTER |
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As a result of requests to name/rename different sites as Vimy Ridge Park in time for the 100th anniversary of the Vimy Ridge battle on April 9 2017, on March 3, 2017 Council directed staff to:

- a) Complete appropriate stakeholder consultation and report back with respect to a location that would be adequate for a suitable Vimy Ridge commemorative location, including the necessary budget;
- b) The request to name a parcel of land located adjacent to Charlie Fox Overpass at Hale Street and Trafalgar Street “Vimy Ridge Park” be referred to the process above, and;
- c) The necessary arrangements be made to designate the above site as the temporary Vimy Ridge Park until the permanent site has been established.

On May 29, 2018 a status update was provided to Council regarding the progress towards selecting a permanent location for Vimy Ridge Park. The report outlined the steps that had been taken to date and presented a draft of criteria that should be considered while selecting the best suited location for this important historical commemoration site.

That report noted that part (c) above had been completed. The following information outlines how part (a) above has been undertaken and provides a recommendation on proceeding with part (b).

BACKGROUND

Site Selection Process

The Battle of Vimy Ridge was a defining moment for the creation of Canada as a country with its own identity. The Canadian National Vimy Memorial is a war memorial National Historic Site in France dedicated to the memory of Canadian Expeditionary Force members killed during the First World War. It also serves as the place of commemoration for Canadian soldiers of the First World War killed or presumed dead in France who have no known grave. The monument is the centerpiece of a 100-hectare preserved battlefield park that encompasses a portion of the ground over which the Canadian Corps made their assault during the initial Battle of Vimy Ridge offensive of the Battle of Arras. The Battle of Vimy Ridge was the first occasion on which all four divisions of the Canadian Expeditionary Force participated in a battle as a cohesive formation, and it became a Canadian national symbol of achievement and sacrifice.

“Vimy Ridge” would be recognized as a prominent name for a park site selected in London and as such, due diligence must be taken for consideration of this site selection. As directed by Council, three sites were considered as possible sites for the permanent Vimy Ridge Park Site:

- a. A planned “Veterans Park” that was originally linked to the Veterans Memorial Parkway community enhancement program that could be the location for military related memorials. This site is on Oxford Street at Crumlin Road, at the gateway to the City from the airport.
- b. The 427 London Wing grounds. This location is owned by the group and is situated on Airport Authority lands at the north end of Crumlin Road. This site has other military memorials and a formal tree planting associated with the 2017 Vimy celebrations.
- c. The temporary park site at the south-east corner of Hale Street and Trafalgar Street, adjacent to the Charlie Fox Memorial and Trooper Mark Wilson Place. Currently there is a community-created memorial feature and flags. The Argyle Community Association has formally adopted this site.

In keeping with the historical importance of this battle to Canada, a detailed site selection criteria list was created that aligns with the City’s site selection process for public art and monuments. Key criterion are:

- A suitable context for the park and memorial site
- A suitably sized space to place a commemorative feature and support event and park uses
- Availability of parking and site amenities that are required to support annual Vimy Ridge events, general park attendance and other commemorative events that might occur
- Vimy Ridge Park should have high visibility and “accessible” access
- Convenience to Londoners and visitors
- What are the capital costs to create the park and a suitable location for a commemorative feature?
- What are the on-going operational costs?
- Potential for community partnerships to support maintenance and/or capital improvements

Staff involved with the City’s Art and Monument Site Selection Committee carried out an evaluation of the three sites, and as requested by Council took that information in May 2019 to a stakeholder’s meeting for their review. Stakeholders included members of the groups representing the two sites, key Military personnel, and community members interested in assisting the outcome of this process.

| Agenda Item # | Page # |
|---------------|-------------|
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The merits of each site and the commitment of each group to their long term vision were presented. A round table discussion on the criteria and the rankings of each of the three sites occurred. Collectively, the group concurred that while all sites had their merits, the temporary site at Hale and Trafalgar Streets scored the highest through the review process.

The Argyle Community Association and the Londoners who placed the memorial features on the site spoke to their vision of the feature being established as a “local” commemoration, not intended to represent nation-wide status. They have also made a commitment to the on-going maintenance of the site and plan to help with further enhancements of the site and memorial.

The group also felt that the vision and efforts of the 427 Wing on their site should be recognized as another location in London to further commemorate military achievements, including Vimy Ridge. It was suggested that London has many commemorative features worthy of attention and that city-wide recognition of these sites would benefit them all. City staff will continue a separate discussion with this group.

Park Concept

City staff have developed a park concept plan for the permanent site that fits within the available budget.

At the stakeholder meeting, a heart-felt discussion occurred around the scale and scope and intent of the current memorial feature at the Hale/Trafalgar site. It was intended to be only a “local” feature, not one of provincial or national scale. Some noted that the physical location of the feature in the rear corner of the site and situated on the mound makes it less visible to the street and less accessible to the public.

Within the available budget, the park plan provides for a small parking lot with 2 accessible spaces and an accessible asphalt pathway to the current memorial site. Upgrades would be done around the memorial to make the benches and feature accessible and more visible. Several trees would be planted along the pathway. See Appendix A for the concept, which will be presented at public open house for further consultation on the design.

Given the good will of the Argyle Community in adopting this space and the potential to fund further enhancements, the plan may evolve through the consultation process.

Financial Considerations

With the completion of the Veterans Memorial Parkway project in July 2017, some of the remaining capital funds (\$105,000 in PD1147) were allocated by Council to assist with the creation of the permanent Vimy Ridge Park site, once it was determined.

With the formalization of this park and its improvements, there will be additional yearly operating costs in the amount of \$7500 to maintain this area as a new park – to be submitted through the 2020 Assessment Growth process.

Next Steps

In keeping with the City’s normal consultation processes for park improvements, the City will plan for a public open house in the fall to showcase the park concept plan and solicit input into the design. Staff have met with the Zone Commander of the Royal Canadian Legion to discuss the consultation process to ensure that specific invitations will go out the many Military groups in London. We will also post the plan on our web site and seek further input from those who cannot make it out to the open house.

The Park Plan will be finalized and reposted on our web site and it is anticipated that construction will begin in May 2020, after the April 9 ceremony.

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| PREPARED BY: | CONCURRED BY: |
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| ANDREW MACPHERSON DIVISION MANAGER. PARKS PLANNING & OPERATIONS PARKS AND RECREATION | JON-PAUL MCGONIGLE DIVISION MANAGER, CULTURE, SPECIAL EVENTS & SPORT SERVICES PARKS AND RECREATION |
| RECOMMENDED BY: | |
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| SCOTT STAFFORD MANAGING DIRECTOR, PARKS AND RECREATION | |

cc Tara Thomas – Manager, Communications
 Robin Armistead – Manager, Culture

APPENDIX A

