1ST REPORT OF THE

TREES AND FORESTS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting held on January 23, 2013, commencing at 12:16 p.m.

PRESENT: B. Shiell (Chair), A. Cantell, S. Curtis-Norcross, I. Kalsi, C. Linton, C. McCallum, B. Porchuk, B. Sandler, J. Winkler and N. Zitani and B. Mercier (Secretary).

ALSO PRESENT: A. Beaton, K. Elliott, I. Listar and S. Rowland.

I YOUR COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS:

Draft Urban Forest Strategy

1. (3) That the Civic Administration **BE REQUESTED** to forward the attached revised comments, prepared by the Trees and Forests Advisory Committee (TFAC), with respect to the draft Urban Forest Strategy, to Bruce Blackwell and Associates Ltd, the Consultants hired by the City to prepare the Strategy;

it being noted that the TFAC reviewed and received a report dated January 23, 2013, from its Working Group, with respect to this matter.

Emerald Ash Borer Funding – Budget Service Change Case #33

2. (4) That the Municipal Council **BE REQUESTED** to continue to maintain the Emerald Ash Borer funding at its current levels; it being noted that:

a) even at its current level the budget allocation is substantially under the original amount endorsed by Council for the management of the Emerald Ash Borer;

b) the elimination of Emerald Ash Borer funding could result in the closing of City parks and trails, the severe denuding of the streetscape and the loss of all previously injected ash trees; and,

c) the exposure of the Corporation and its citizens to risk and loss of public trust;

it being noted that the Trees and Forests Advisory Committee (TFAC) reviewed and received a communication from A. Cantell, with respect to the elimination of the Emerald Ash Borer program funding from the 2013 Operating Budget.

II YOUR COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Election of Chair and Vice Chair

3. That the Trees and Forests Advisory Committee (TFAC) elected B. Shiell as its Chair and J. Winkler as its Vice Chair for the term ending November 30, 2013.

Deferred Matters and Task List

4. (6) That the Trees and Forests Advisory Committee (TFAC) deferred discussion of its Deferred Matters and Task List to its next meeting.

5. That the Trees and Forests Advisory Committee (TFAC) noted and filed the following:

3rd Report of the TFAC

a) (1, 8) the 3rd Report of the Trees and Forests Advisory Committee from its meeting held on November 28, 2012 and a Municipal Council resolution adopted at its meeting held on January 15, 2013, with respect to this matter;

EEPAC Representatives

b) (2) a communication dated December 12, 2012, from B. Mercier, Committee Secretary, with respect to the Environmental and Ecological Planning Advisory Committee representatives on the Trees and Forests Advisory Committee and the Advisory Committee on the Environment;

TFAC Resignation – C. Neilans

c) (5, 7) a communication from C. Neilans and a Municipal Council resolution adopted at its meeting held on January 15, 2013, with respect to his resignation from the TFAC;

Next Meeting

6. That the Trees and Forests Advisory Committee (TFAC) will hold its next meeting on February 27, 2013.

The meeting adjourned at 2:40 p.m.

The aim of the Urban Forest Strategy is to specify what needs to happen in order to achieve the community's vision of the urban forest in the Forest City. At the 28 November 2012 meeting of the Trees and Forests Advisory Committee (TFAC) a Working Group was struck to review and comment on the draft Urban Forest Strategy prepared by Bruce Blackwell and Associates Ltd.

A special meeting for the Working Group occurred on 12 December 2012, but proved to be insufficient time to cover all the areas of concern. Over the holiday break and into the New Year members of the Working Group continued with their comments, consolidated into a single working document (to be distributed at this meeting).

It is not possible to address every comment in the working document through this Report or the meeting. The Working Group has, therefore, selected for this Report what are believed to be the more important comments or issues that may be requiring clarification or direction. Some comments express a difference from past decisions of the previous TFAC.

Those comments of a formatting or editorial nature or of a non-controversial nature will be forwarded as part of the general communication to the Consultant as a matter of course, however the TFAC are advised that the following points to date, in no particular order, are presented as likely requiring TFAC clarification, direction or approval for including in the final draft Urban Forest Strategy which will be presented to the public and onward to full Council for approval.

THAT trees and woodlands be formally recognised by the City as infrastructure and appraised as infrastructure assets

THAT "right tree, right place" prevail, but with better definition in order to ensure it meets our goals, with the view of minimizing the use of non-native evasive tree species.

THAT "climate appropriate" and "native" species and climate-appropriate seed selections be given more emphasis or weight, to achieve a diverse species profile

THAT the urban forest definition be extended to "tree-dominated" ecosystems

THAT planting of private residential lands and industrial land be more strongly emphasised for future tree planting projects as these land-use types offer the most plantable space;

THAT private land must be targeted for community tree planting projects

THAT the Vision statement be changed (by the Consultant) – to include "valued and celebrated" and to best describe our new vision

THAT there must be consistency in use of the term "canopy cover" rather than "leaf cover"

THAT "mitigation banks" and their use must be defined

THAT a "woodland cover" target be established for the municipality as a whole, and it is recommended that the target served to increase the total amount of woodland cover in the municipality

THAT heritage trees (or any other special trees that could deserve protection) are only protected with the consent of the tree owner and the City make provision for assisting the tree owner with the costs of maintaining this 'community asset'

THAT current City policies and standards that are in direct conflict with the aims of the Strategy be changed, rather than new polices or standards created

THAT woodland purchase by the City be continued, with a commitment to long term maintenance

THAT "improve urban forest integrity" be used in place of "improve urban forest health"

THAT a connected and protected natural heritage system be across the City

THAT an contingency fund be created for emergency response

THAT securities be demanded of City contractors working around trees

THAT any computerised City tree maintenance management system have the technological capability to automatically generate an email to the complainant/enquirer about the result of their request for action, in the interest of enhanced customer service

THAT the Strategy must be explicit in what "monitoring" entails within each 4-year Council period, and required major reviews over a longer timeframe

THAT modelling be included in long-term planning to project future canopy losses or gains under various scenarios

THAT it is recommended that the Consultant address the public health issues as impacted by the Urban Forest Strategy while not negatively impacting the Biodiversity

DISCUSSION

Tree value remains critical for managing the urban forest as many decisions are based on cost, or a cost: benefit analysis. The corporate financial asset value only recognises the cost of installing the tree – its planting cost – which makes every City tree vulnerable as any tree may be valued at a few hundred dollars; rather, trees should be appraised. With tree appraisal – and there are many systems of tree appraisal in use around the globe - multiple factors are considered to derive a value that better represents its value-to-the-community. Thus a highly valuable tree or group of trees or woodland may be recognised in real dollar terms, and effort made to preserve it at a cost the tax-payer will be better informed to understand. It will require corporate, community and political will to apply these appraised tree values consistently in everyday decisions but it is recommended that a system of tree appraisal be in the urban forest toolkit.

Native species must continue to play their part in our urban forest, and it is agreed that underutilised native species should be tried to assess their potential as an urban tree. To that end the City recently amended its Tree Planting Guidelines to allow for planting of species that are neither on its approved list nor on the list of prohibited species. There is, therefore, a mechanism for expanding the approved species list as we gain more knowledge.

Nevertheless, native species forced to grow in conditions for which they have not evolved may not thrive. The urban environment is essentially a human-made environment in which native soils and native environmental conditions of hydrology, temperature, nutrient cycling and fertility rarely occur. Few native species may flourish in our changing climate, and it may be foolish to discount or diminish the role of non-native species if these are "climate appropriate". Weighting of native versus non-native must remain flexible so that the right tree is chosen in the right place. No change in weighting of natives or non-natives is recommended, rather that the "right tree, right place" prevail. It is also recommended that, as far as native species are concerned, emphasis should be put on selecting from stock grown from seed collected in areas that experience our current and future climate conditions.

The definition of the urban forest was approved by the previous TFAC, based on the definition given in the draft UFORE report. Shrubs and other plant species do provide considerable benefits to urban forest ecosystem health and integrity, and there is plenty of research to support the role of these plants in tree establishment and succession to climax forest. That said, it is recommended that the targets for canopy cover should be defined as tree canopy cover.
The Vision Statement referred to here was approved as part of the Forestry Strategic Review, however it was noted in the original Request for Proposals that:

"There are different vision statements that need to be reviewed and synthesized to recognize the importance of the urban forest. These include:

- *Official Plan Vision Statement - The City of London Official Plan will provide guidance for the physical development of a healthy community that will contribute to the well-being of all Londoners and that is sustainable for the benefit of future generations. Through the implementation of the Plan, City Council will: i) ....protect and enhance nature within the City.....iv) protect and enhance natural attributes that are significant to the maintenance of ecosystem health in the Thames Valley and Kettle Creek watersheds; v).....An expanded and enhanced system of parklands, natural areas and trails along the valleys and ravines of the Thames River and Kettle Creek watersheds will provide continuous corridors for recreation, wildlife habitat and refuge from urban life;*

- *Vision 96, London Environmental Plan – We are a community that respects our environment and protects and enhances the quality of our air, water and land to sustain healthy plant, animal and human communities and the connections between them*

- *Forestry Review – The City of London truly reflects the slogan "The Forest City". Its abundant urban forest is resilient, diversified, and healthy. The well maintained green infrastructure provides the citizens of the City of London with a safe and secure environment while preserving and enhancing environmental, aesthetic, economic, and psychological benefits*

- *TFAC – As the Forest City, London will be a leader in conserving, planting and caring for our trees and woodlands*

- *London Strengthening Neighbourhoods Strategy – Our London is a City of neighbourhoods. Our London neighbourhoods will be empowered, sustainable, safe and active communities. We will care for and celebrate each other while encouraging diversity and inclusiveness. Our neighbourhoods will be environmentally and socially responsible and will have available green space, vibrant local economies and accessible amenities of daily life.*

The Vision Statement has been criticised by other parties during the broader consultation process. It is considered appropriate that it should now be changed to better describe our new vision for the urban forest.

"Canopy cover" refers to the land area covered by tree canopy, a 2D measurement looking directly down from above at the width of the canopy. "Leaf cover" is the sum of leaf cover present throughout the tree crown, a 3D measurement that includes canopy depth. "Leaf cover" was the term approved by the previous TFAC. Consistency in one term or the other is required, and if we are to monitor our performance against that of other municipalities it would be sensible to use "canopy cover" which is the most common term used. Notwithstanding the decision of the previous TFAC, it is recommended that "canopy cover" be the consistent term.

"Right tree, right place" requires better definition if it is to achieve the vision the community has expressed it desires and not, for example, be a tool used to exclude large stature shade trees from our streets. It is recommended that further guidance be provided as to what this term should mean that is understandable both to the lay person and professionals tasked with implementing it.

"Mitigation banks" may be thought of as spare land suitable for tree planting, in which developers (or anyone else) invest in tree planting to off-set the failure to achieve a tree-related target on land they own. Mitigation is often sought in planning applications where the overall benefits of the development are thought to outweigh a policy or standard that demands something different. For example, if a developer intends to install solar power panels on a low-income, high-density housing scheme, trees that would otherwise be required may not readily be accommodated; mitigation may be deemed appropriate with trees planted off-site someplace else in a mitigation bank. A concern is that mitigation banks cannot be the answer to every development that comes up against an obstacle and must only be used in the cases that achieve significant benefits to the community as a whole (rather than the economic interests of the developer), weighed against the tree benefits that were foregone. It is recommended, therefore, that mitigation banks be described in simple terms (preferably in the UFS, or else in the Background Document), and the UFS should require (or even recommend) a criterion (criteria) for their use.

"Woodland cover" is very low for The Forks watershed (which is, essentially, the City) and is an indicator of poor forest conditions that can diminish hydrological quality and function. This is not unusual for a City, which rarely has large tracts of woodland, and in London it is exacerbated by clearance outside the Urban Growth Boundary for agriculture. The question is whether a target for woodland cover is appropriate, and will it be achievable? Inside the Urban Growth Boundary, or outside on prime agricultural land?

Divergence from City-owned lands to private lands for community tree planting projects seems a logical suggestion. The City simply cannot provide all the urban forest from its own lands. The public consultation revealed a strong desire to plant trees on private land (i.e. in the respondent's own yard), the inference being that cost and transport of a tree from the nursery or garden centre are the main problems. Currently there are some grants for planting on private land (e.g. the Conservation Authorities fund large-scale woodland planting) and ReForest London and the City has given away free trees - but with no guarantee they will definitely be planted within the City. It is anticipated there will be obstacles with potential funding partners if this goal is to be achievable, but in implementation there could be a solution as it may be more palatable starting with those lands that provide a community service e.g Housing Associations, Shelters, Hospices and similar? It is considered appropriate that if the City and the community is to achieve its vision for the urban forest, the targeting of private land for community planting projects should be part of the long-term UFS.

A Bylaw or other regulation (e.g. Ontario Heritage Act) for Heritage trees, or any other special category of trees that may be deemed to deserve protection, will typically restrict the private owner of that tree from exercising certain rights. The process by which trees may be protected takes as an example the designation of heritage buildings, whereby the owner consents to the designation. Often that designation means the owner can then apply for grants to maintain the heritage building, and the owner can still apply for a permit to alter or even demolish that building, depending on circumstance. Given that heritage or special trees are often already mature at the time their value is recognised, consideration must be given to the costs of

maintaining a veteran tree; arboricultural management costs are usually much higher when attempting to preserve a tree in its later years in an urban setting – at some point the owner will not be able to afford its upkeep without financial assistance, or the tree must be removed for safety. It would make sense that the tree owner consents to the protection at the time protection is considered, with full understanding of what commitment that involves. If the protected tree later passes into new ownership, that new owner should know the tree is already protected and would, one supposes, make a conscious decision to acquire it with that protection and all the constraints and responsibilities that brings. Indeed, it is probable that a tree owner may consent to his/her tree being protected knowing that protection will continue after they have sold their interest in their tree. To address the costs to the private owner of maintaining a 'community asset', a recommendation ought to be that the City make provision for maintenance of veteran trees for those owners who are unable to afford the ongoing costs of upkeep.

One of the main aims of the Strategy was to identify gaps in policy, or policy that is inconsistent with the community's vision for the urban forest, and to suggest fixes. A number of such gaps or inconsistent standards or policies have been identified, covering issues of site grading, soil conservation and quality, location of setbacks from the road allowance, compensation for loss of significant woodlands, and so forth. If a new policy is made which conflicts with some other policy, that creates confusion and Council has to determine which holds more weight; Council may be guided by the risk, and any legislative hierarchy of choosing one over another. While some policies may be thought undefeatable, examples of municipal best management practices elsewhere have demonstrated you can 'have it both ways' – and not always at increased cost or lost profit. It is recommended that it is better to correct the existing inconsistent policy or standard than to seek a new one that conflicts with that, but recognising that new policies or standards may be appropriate if none yet exist and a gap needs to be filled.

Currently the City acquires land through a variety of methods, and a small annual budget is available currently for woodland purchase. The City should have resources to buy and manage woodlands to their best potential, especially those already degraded by invasive species and human activities. Those that meet the criteria of "significant woodland" should be favoured by the City and purchased with a financial commitment to long term maintenance for identified features of significance.

Urban forest integrity was suggested to be a better term than urban forest health, in that health suggests an optimal state that is to be obtained. It is considered that these words carry the same meaning at the ecosystem level, and may be interchangeable. It is recommended, therefore, that "urban forest integrity" would be an acceptable term.

The argument for a Green Belt is to preserve natural features (the natural heritage system) not yet impacted severely by development at the outskirts of the City. This would still allow agricultural practices to continue. It is debatable whether that would serve the aims of the urban forest strategy. Agricultural land values are already high, and woodland may be cleared even more extensively for farming, whether it is Green Belt, or not (and this remains a threat to woodland cover outside the UGB as rates of return from woodland are less attractive compared with the current high-price commodities like corn, soy or specialty crops). Where Green Belts have been made, there has been a problem of satellite or leap-frog development that occurs just beyond the Green Belt boundary, eroding important features there. Rather, the concept of a Green Ribbon, or a Green Net might be more relevant, recognising the natural heritage features of, and desire for interconnectedness of habitats along, the Forks of the Thames, and connecting with other tributaries and vegetated corridors to connect it to the wider landscape beyond the City limits, potentially allowing for species to migrate and increasing the resiliency of the urban forest. This concept of an inter-connected and protected natural heritage system is preferred.

A fund for urban forest restoration, to be used in the event of a catastrophic loss (whether through pest, disease, flood, fire, wind or any other disaster) is required. The recent experience from the Emerald Ash Borer outbreak, hot on the heels of Dutch elm disease and Hickory Bark Borer, has demonstrated that the City was not prepared for these emergent problems and Council failed to heed early warnings, leaving the City ill equipped to cope with the demands now placed upon it. It is recommended that a contingency fund be made, with a realistic sum to address emergent threats robustly and immediately.

The idea that City contractors should provide a holdback or security to ensure that they are effectively penalised if they cause damage to a tree is neat in its simplicity. Currently, most City contracts specify a holdback of 10% of total value for 30 days after completion to ensure the system is functioning as planned. The same could be said for a tree in, or in proximity to, the work area. It is recommended that this holdback or security be included.

It is recommended that automatic generation of response emails be included in the technological specifications of the future computerised City tree management system.

Monitoring is the way success will be measured; if the City does not monitor effectively, we will never know if we have achieved our goals, or on what other trajectory we are headed. The type of things to be monitored must be identified with a recommendation as to how it may be so measured. Regular reporting is required, and to coincide with changes of administration it is recommended that a 4-year monitoring horizon be set for most indicators, and longer-term for major reviews.

Modelling is an extremely useful tool for urban forest planning, as it allows for manipulation of many variables (e.g. climate change, demographic change, pest epidemics) and may compel a call to action by Council. It is recommended that urban forest modelling capability be included in the City's computerised management system toolkit.