



MEMBER MOTION

Section 5.4.4(b) of Procedure By-law

Meeting: Council ✓
Meeting Date: Wednesday March 23, 2022
Subject/Title: Expanding Walkable trails and Supporting Agriculture in the Greenbelt
Submitted by: Councillor Tom Muench

Whereas, the protection of the Oak Ridges Moraine buffer areas & the Greenbelt are very important long term priorities for the people and Council of Richmond Hill requiring action;

Whereas, Richmond Hill Council passed a motion on April 14, 2021 to review the opportunity to expand walking trails in Richmond Hill, while supporting expanding farming and Agriculture as part of the York Region’s Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) process; and

Whereas, Richmond Hill Council’s approved April 14 2021 motion was intended to achieve more walkable trails for Richmond Hill and was approved in a pandemic period which had residents utilizing walking and trails more; and

Whereas, York Region has a deadline for comments to its 30 year draft MCR by March 31, 2022, (plan until 2051) making this a time sensitive motion; and

Whereas, the City of Richmond Hill strives in its official and working plans to create walkable, complete, connected, culturally vibrant neighbourhoods, and have directed staff on its March 9, 2022 parks key direction plan to expand active and passive recreation; and

Whereas, unofficial digital apps have been created directing people on their cell phones to the Jefferson Forest Trail without qualified trail validation, which has led to injuries requiring emergency services support on the Jefferson trail over the past year; and

Whereas, the Town of Whitchurch – Stouffville has passed motions for reclassification of lands to allow for urban municipal planning along the 404 corridor which is adjacent to the City of Richmond Hill, and;

Whereas, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food on August 22, 1994 advised in a letter to York Region noting

“York Region has a diverse agriculture character that putting all the lands that are shown as agriculture into the same designation could water down the strength of the policies”; and

Whereas, the Resources Management Branch – Agricultural Land Use unit of the Provincial Governments, Ministry of Agriculture and Food on July 24, 2002 advised in a letter to York Region

“No provincially significant agricultural areas were identified within the Town Richmond Hill, Newmarket and Aurora”; and

Whereas, large production / “traditional” farming of the area is no longer viable due to the decline of the rural character of the area, the closing of the CASE dealer in Whitchurch - Stouffville, the excessive cost to transport the agricultural products to silos in communities like Guelph due to the silo discontinuation in Bradford, and the higher water table makes the yield of production farming low, and impossible to support; and

Whereas, Richmond Hill Staff did not execute, provide any information or engage local stakeholder farmers directly and exclusively on this topic as directed by the April 14, 2021 motion; and

Whereas, submissions received to both York Region and the City of Richmond Hill MCR processes, it has been stated that land fragmentation has broken down the intended transition, buffer areas and the land no longer supports the Countryside designation; and **THEREFORE BE RESOLVED** that the City of Richmond Hill;

1. **Reinstates** on its City Plan 2041 Proposed Urban Structure Figure 2. 1-2 the area previously identified as “Request expansion of the City’s urban boundary to include lands designated ORM Countryside south of Bethesda Road” as originally proposed in 2020; and
2. **Requests** York Region provide a wholesome approach in its 30 year MCR to provide a passive and active recreation and parks plan which should include the allowance of an **expansion of walkable and integrated trails**, where feasible within the lands in the Gormley Go Station area. This would include amending where appropriate Oak Ridges Moraine (ORM) designations prior to adoption of the York Region Official Plan (City Plan 2041); and
3. **Requests** York Region during its 30 year MCR plan provide for parks, transit and growth needs of the Gormley Go Station area and where possible enhance Natural Linkage and Natural Core of the environment; and
4. **Requests**, the Province of Ontario to assist wherever possible to link designations and **consider collaborative approaches** including creating a provincial park and all assistance to create a linear park system within the Oak Ridges Moraine and Greenbelt using all Provincial Assets where feasible and appropriate which could include;
 - i. Metrolinx lands
 - ii. York Region lands
 - iii. Toronto Regional Conservation Lands (TRCA)
 - iv. York Region School Boards (YRDSB and YRCDSB); and
 - v. City of Richmond Hill lands; and
5. **Requests**, the Province of Ontario to take the input from the City of Richmond Hill and York Region MCR’s and carry out an evaluation of the Greenbelt, and Oak

Ridges Moraine policies to ensure strong, consistent and updated approaches assuring the long term commitment in its plans to enhance and protect Natural Linkage and Natural Core classifications in the Greenbelt and Oak Ridges Moraine policies going forward consistent with all Provincial policies; and

6. **Submit** a request to the Minister of Municipal Affairs to re-designate the subject lands through an amendment to the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan from “Countryside” to “Settlement” in order to provide for the applicable Official Plan Amendments to occur at the local municipal (City of Richmond Hill) and Region of York level through their respective Municipal Comprehensive Reviews (MCR’s).
7. Send a copy of this resolution to
 - a. York Regional Council,
 - b. Members of Provincial Parliament (M.P.P.s),
 - c. Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing,
 - d. Ministry of Agriculture,
 - e. Ministry of the Environment,
 - f. Ministry of Finance, and
 - g. the Ministry of Transportation

Moved by: Councillor Tom Muench

Seconded by: