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The Regional Municipality of Durham Information Report

From: Commissioner of Planning and Economic Development
Report: #2020-INFO-28
Date: April 3, 2020

Subject:

Carruthers Creek Watershed Plan Update, Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Public Consultation, File: D07-17-01

Recommendation:

Receive for information

Report:

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise Council that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Public Open House for the Carruthers Creek Watershed Plan Update that was scheduled to be held on Thursday April 30th, is being postponed. Additionally, an assessment will be made no later than Friday June 5th on whether it will be necessary to extend the June 16th deadline for the receipt of written comments.

2. Background

2.1 On March 13, 2020 a draft of the Carruthers Creek Watershed Plan Update was released to Council and the public for a 90-day review and comment period, (see [Commissioner's Report #2020-INFO-18](#)).

2.2 Over the past three weeks there has been an escalation of closures and measures by all levels of government in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including the prohibition of organized public events and social gatherings of more than five people.

3. COVID-19 Impacts on Public Consultation

- 3.1 With the release of the draft Carruthers Creek Watershed Plan Update on March 13, 2020, the project entered the final stage of planned public consultation. This final stage includes a 90-day public review and comment period (ending June 16, 2020) as well as a planned Public Open House scheduled for April 30, 6 to 9 pm at the Audley Recreation Centre in Ajax.
- 3.2 In order to observe applicable public orders, efforts to limit crowds, and practice physical distancing, **the planned April 30th Public Open House is being postponed.** Durham staff will work with the project team at the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA), as well as staff at the Town of Ajax and City of Pickering in the coming weeks to develop an alternative approach to conducting the planned in-person Public Open House. In early June, Staff will also evaluate the need to extend the deadline for receipt of public comments on the Watershed Plan Update.
- 3.3 Notice of the Public Open House cancellation will be distributed via TRCA's social media platforms and posted on the [Carruthers Creek project website](#). This notice will also be sent by TRCA staff to all individuals who previously provided comments on the Watershed Plan Update and/or those who requested to be notified of project progress.

4. Additional Data and Information

- 4.1 Following the release of the draft Carruthers Creek Watershed Plan Update and supporting technical reports, requests were received by TRCA staff for additional underlying data and information that support the management recommendations, (e.g. Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping layers, and certain data and models used in the analysis). The information requested, while included in the supporting technical reports to the Watershed Plan, was not initially made available in a digital format.
- 4.2 TRCA staff are in the process of making the additional information available. A statement has been posted on the [Carruthers Creek project website](#) advising of the availability of additional information and how to submit a request. All interested members of the public and agencies will be provided with the equal opportunity to access the underlying data and information.

5. Conclusion and Next Steps

5.1 Given the current COVID-19 situation, it is appropriate to **postpone the planned April 30th, 2020 Public Open House**.

5.2 Once new arrangements have been made, details will be communicated in a future Council Information Report.

5.3 A copy of this report will be forward to the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, the Town of Ajax and the City of Pickering.

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

Brian Bridgeman, MCIP, RPP
Commissioner of Planning and
Economic Development