

Jan 17, 2008

Good evening Mayor Jackson, Members of Committee, staff and citizens of Burlington,

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to make some brief remarks on behalf of the Save General Brock Park Committee. I have come to discuss Community and Corporate Services Committee report # 2/08.

Before I do that, I would like to express thanks on behalf of our Committee for naming Kim Phillips as our link to City Hall and reaffirming our role as an Official Committee to Council. We look forward to working with Mayor Jackson, Councillor Dennison and Ms. Phillips as we continue to work together to ensure General Brock Park is maintained into perpetuity.

However, because we are not expected to meet with staff until later in the month to discuss the clarification of the Strategic Land Acquisition Fund, and the item is a topic of review today, we felt it important to attend to make sure you were aware of our input.

Our concern and associated recommendation pertains to the wording used to describe the Strategic Land Acquisition Fund in report Comser -2/08, which reads:

- "In 2007, Council approved the establishment of a Strategic Land Acquisition Reserve Fund for the purpose of strategic land acquisition, including parkland."

While we are certainly pleased that the fund was established, and are aware that other lands will present themselves to be of strategic importance to the City, it was our understanding that the intent of the fund would be dedicated solely to protecting at-risk green space or natural lands.

Although we have been assured that General Brock and other at-risk green space is important to this Council, and that the fund could figure prominently in acquiring lands such as these, we are asking that members of this Committee make a motion to revisit the fund's purpose and re-define it solely for the acquisition of at-risk green space.

I want to make it clear that we are not speaking solely in the interests of General Brock – the request being made this evening is to ensure that funds are readily available to acquire any parks or green space that might become available, and to ensure that these funds do not have to be measured against other interests the City may have at the time (e.g., lands for capital projects, etc...).

While we are confident that this Council has the best of intentions for ensuring the City holds on to its remaining green space, Councils eventually change and matters deemed to be urgent in the short-term can sometimes replace long-range objectives. Therefore, we feel it is extremely important that the Strategic Land Acquisition Fund include a clear framework that won't potentially lend itself to uses that will leave the City without adequate resources when a piece of vital and limited green space is made available for acquisition.

I would also like to point out that SGBPC is not making a request that is incongruent with the City's own strategic priorities. Your new strategic plan (Future Focus VII) identifies Environmental Stewardships as one of the City's guiding priorities over the next several years. In doing so, it outlines a number of specific objectives that are designed to build:

- "a clean, green and environmentally healthy city where the city actively participates and encourages environmentally responsible programs, policies and actions that work to improve and restore our natural environment."

Since I'm sure that you're all well aware of the central role of parks and green spaces in achieving these objectives, I will not go into detail.

However, I would like to remind the Committee that we are approaching residential build-out in the next five to seven years and that once a park or green space is paved over, it's gone forever.

Ensuring there is a strategic fund dedicated to the environment that can't be misinterpreted along the way, will honour this Council's commitment to recognizing a balanced approach to planning and funding for the City of Burlington. With this in mind, we ask that you consider our request to dedicate the Strategic Land Acquisition Fund for the purposes of at-risk green spaces that may become threatened . –

Thank you for your time and consideration.

John V.