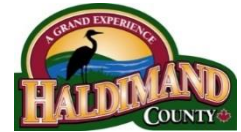

HALDIMAND COUNTY

Report PED-COM-09-2018 Community Partnership Program – Dunnville Thompson Creek Park Rehabilitation



For Consideration by Council in Committee on May 15, 2018

OBJECTIVE:

To approve a request to undertake, at Dunnville Centennial Park and Thompson Creek Park, the rehabilitation of parkland and a naturalized trail and installation of associated signage to create an outdoor classroom, and to approve related capital project funding from the Community Partnership Capital Reserve.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT Report PED-COM-09-2018 Community Partnership Program – Dunnville Thompson Creek Park Rehabilitation be received;
2. AND THAT the request from the Dunnville Horticultural Society to undertake the rehabilitation of the Thompson Creek parkland and naturalized trail be approved;
3. AND THAT capital funding to an upset amount of \$11,550 to support the rehabilitation of the Thompson Creek parkland and naturalized trail, with related funding from the Community Partnership Capital Reserve, be approved;
4. AND THAT project and funding approval are conditional upon compliance with Policy 2011-01 and County installation standards, permits and processes;
5. AND THAT the revised budget as outlined in PED-COM-09-2018 be approved.

Prepared by: Katrina Schmitz, Community Partnership Liaison

Reviewed by: Sheila Wilson, CPRP, Manager, Community Development and Partnerships

Respectfully submitted: Craig Manley, MCIP, RPP, General Manager of Planning and Economic Development

Approved: Donald G. Boyle, Chief Administrative Officer

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

For many years Dunnville Horticultural Society (DHS) has used the County's Community Beautification and Community Partnership Program (CPP) Capital Project grants to undertake beautification activities, including rehabilitating the Fountain and Gardens in Dunnville Centennial Park last year and planting trees in Central Park.

Building on those successes, DHS wants to work with community partners to complete a project started twenty years ago: the Thompson Creek Restoration, which included the care of the wetlands, establishment of a Carolinian Arboretum Education Centre and creation of naturalized pathways. The details of the work proposed to complete the original vision of this restoration include:

- Preservation and management of this wetland area and the related habitat;

- Completion of a natural pathway system;
- Clean-up of the area/arboretum of Carolinian species planted almost two decades ago;
- Labelling of species in the arboretum (trees, tall grasses and bushes);
- Installation of waterfowl and songbird nesting structures;
- Signage identifying the ‘outdoor classroom’ (the pavilion at Dunnville Centennial Park), built as part of the original project and including the history and significance of the area;
- Installation of educational signage along the pathways; and
- Identification of species in the arboretum, including QR code links to additional resources.

The proposal has been reviewed by the CPP Staff Review Team—including extensive consultation and site visits with the County’s Forestry Project Manager—and staff are recommending approval and funding for this project.

BACKGROUND:

Haldimand County’s Community Partnership Program (CPP) is intended to encourage and enhance strategic partnerships to the benefit of community stakeholders and the municipality, offering a simple, streamlined and customer-focused approach. The Program is intended to balance the rigor of the review process—necessary to ensure legitimate public interest issues are addressed—with flexibility and respect for the volunteer commitment of the groups.

Since 2011, more than fifty CPP projects have been approved and more than forty completed, leveraging almost \$1.8 million in community-raised funds to construct \$3.2 million in County enhancements.

Dunnville Horticultural Society (DHS) has been a proactive and engaged community group for almost ninety years. The request from the group is for:

- (i) Approval to undertake this project on Haldimand County property; and
- (ii) Capital funding to support the rehabilitation of the Thompson Creek Arboretum (Attachment 1) with related upset funding in the amount of \$11,550 from the Community Partnership Capital Reserve, representing 35% of the total budget of \$33,000.

ANALYSIS:

The Proponent:

The Dunnville Horticultural Society (DHS) was first organized in 1929 by a group of citizens interested in beautifying the community. Initial projects including the planting of flower beds and trees in public parks, the distribution of seed packets to school children, the hosting of flower shows and the creation of the Trillium Award, which recognizes the home beautification efforts of residents. For several decades the group has participated in Dunnville’s many community events and festivals, always ensuring the town is welcoming and attractive for residents and visitors.

DHS has used the County’s Community Beautification grants to plant flower beds, planters and baskets throughout the town. As well, the organization applied for and received Community Partnership Program (CPP) Capital Project grants to rehabilitate Dunnville’s downtown fountain, install community art and rehabilitate the gardens around ‘Muddy’ the Mudcat.

In 2017, in celebration of Canada’s 150th birthday, DHS undertook its most ambitious partnership project, working with the County and multiple community groups to rehabilitate the public art fountain and butterfly gardens in Dunnville Centennial Park. This \$30,000 project grew once DHS was mobilized on-site, with the group completing additional fund-raising to install several decorative benches and

legacy story boards to complement the Park rehabilitation. The community enthusiasm generated by DHS's Centennial Park project resulted in the municipality undertaking additional safety enhancements in the Park, including the paving of pathways and installation of ramps and additional railings at the bridge leading to Lions Park and Grandview Lodge.

Also in 2017, DHS took advantage of a partnership opportunity with Grand Erie Home Hardware to secure third-party grant funding from Tree Canada to replant trees in Dunnville Central Park, the site of some of DHS's original tree planting in the community.

The current request to rehabilitate the Thompson Creek Restoration area is an opportunity to extend the public park areas around Centennial Park, Lions Park and Grandview Lodge; as well, it represents the completion of a conservation project which was first initiated twenty years ago. The project was started 20 years ago by the Dunnville Bioregion Association, which included the Town of Dunnville.

The Partners:

During the rehabilitation of Dunnville Centennial Park, DHS became very familiar with the adjacent Thompson Creek Restoration area, including the wetlands, naturalized pathways, Carolinian tree plantings, tall grasses and more. Prior to completion of the Centennial Park Fountain and Gardens project, DHS reached out to one of the original volunteers and leaders on the project, Dunnville resident Dan McKay, who had been instrumental in developing the planting plan with multiple partners at that time.

In summer 2017, DHS, McKay, the Dunnville Rotary Club, the local Ward Councillor and Haldimand County and Grand River Conservation Area (GRCA) staff met to discuss potential opportunities for rehabilitation of the Thompson Creek area, with a plan to consider re-starting the restoration efforts. Coincidentally, in fall 2017, DHS was approached by Tall Grass Ontario/Ministry of Natural Resources and Fisheries regarding the possibility of a controlled burn of the tall grasses to remove invasive species. (This should normally be done every five years, but had not been undertaken since the grasses were planted twenty years ago.)

Community interest in the proposal has been building. Aside from the above-noted partners, three local schools—Dunnville Secondary School, Thompson Creek Elementary School and Dunnville Christian School—have asked to become involved in the project, offering assistance with regular clean ups.

Project Details:

DHS and its partners have spent considerable time with County staff, assessing the site and the required work. Haldimand County's Forestry Project Manager will also be developing an inventory of trees in the area this summer to support maintenance and management efforts in the future.

At this time, the following is proposed:

- Completion of a natural pathway system, including creating a proper naturalized pathway on the east side of Thompson Creek (Lions Park/Grandview side) to complement the path on the west side (which is maintained by the County);
- Clean-up of the arboretum of Carolinian species planted almost two decades ago;
- Controlled burn of the tall grasses to address invasive species. This work is done by licensed professionals with an appropriate permit;
- Planting of wild flowers within the arboretum and Thompson Creek area;
- Labelling of species in the arboretum (trees, tall grasses and bushes);
- Installation of waterfowl and songbird nesting structures;
- Large signage identifying the 'outdoor classroom' (the Centennial Park pavilion, which was constructed for this purpose as part of the original project), including the history and significance of the wetlands and naturalized area;
- Installation of educational signage along the pathways; and

- Identification of species in the arboretum, including QR code links to additional resources.

Need & Community Benefit:

This proposal addresses the opportunity to complete a project initiated two decades ago and restore the Thompson Creek parklands for the enjoyment of the public. The proposed improvements were always envisioned but have not been completed as of yet. It complements the already-completed Centennial Park revitalization and creates a no-cost recreational amenity for residents and visitors. As well, it supports the objectives of the County's Forestry Management Plan, including an inventory of trees, shrubs and bushes in the area for ongoing maintenance and management. From a conservation perspective, completing the restoration demonstrates the community's commitment to this natural gem, including better management of the wetlands and plantings.

The number of partners which have come forward to provide assistance and support in completing this conservation project confirms the community's appreciation for this site. (In particular, the interest of the three adjacent schools in this project reaffirms the meaningfulness of the arboretum's original objective to become an 'outdoor classroom'.) The location is also ideal for birding and geocaching—which reinforces County tourism initiatives—and supports the objectives of Haldimand County's Trails Master Plan and Partnership Framework Study for enhanced physical connectivity within communities, especially in areas near bodies of water (e.g. Thompson Creek).

Project Review:

The proposal was reviewed by an interdepartmental team of County staff (the CPP Staff Review Team) and was favourably received as it meets the following CPP priorities and objectives:

- (i) Community Vibrancy and Healthy Community;
- (ii) Corporate Image and Efficient Government;
- (iii) Creates or maintains public infrastructure;
- (iv) Reduces the cost of government services by optimizing partnership resources; and
- (v) Capitalizes on collective energies and expertise of participating groups.

DHS was requested to continue to work with the County's Forestry Project Manager and Community Development & Partnerships Division staff to develop the project, if approved, including ensuring all plans meet County and GRCA standards and permitting.

The proposal was also reviewed by Haldimand County's Accessibility Advisory Committee and, although only portions of the site are accessible, the Committee was very supportive of the initiative.

FINANCIAL/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

Policy No. 2011-01 states the Community Partnership Program (CPP) will encourage and actively support partnerships with not-for-profit community groups. Within the Community Capital Projects Grant Program, Council has the responsibility to approve community capital projects with an overall budget of greater than \$10,000.

The overall proposed budget for this project is \$33,000; the requested funding of \$11,550 is in keeping with the Community Capital Projects Grants Program funding limitation of 35% of the total project value.

Based upon the approved/recommended projects to date requiring funding from the Community Partnership Capital Reserve, there are sufficient funds available in the Reserve. Should this initiative be approved there remains approximately \$125,485 in the Community Partnership Capital Reserve which is unallocated.

The CPP policy also requires all community funding for Council-approved projects be in place with the County or secured/confirmed with the applicable community group prior to the start of any on-site work.

Dunnville Horticultural Society and its partners intend to begin fund-raising for their share of the project upon approval of the request.

As a result of the proposed project, the following capital budget amendment is required:

	Current Approved Budget	Proposed Revised Budget
Expenditures:		
Dunnville Horticultural Society – Thompson Creek Rehabilitation	\$0	\$33,000
Total Expenditures:	\$0	\$33,000
Financing:		
Community Contribution (65%)	\$0	\$21,450
Community Partnership Capital Reserve (35%)	\$0	\$11,550
Total Financing:	\$0	\$33,000

In addition to the funding required for the requested rehabilitation, the Public Sector Accounting Board (PSAB) reporting standards require the County to record the fair market value of contributed assets. This enhancement will be amortized over the estimated life of the associated asset for accounting purposes.

Ongoing additional operating costs (inspections, maintenance and repairs) will be the responsibility of Haldimand County’s Facilities and Parks Operations Division staff in collaboration with the partners. Staff already undertake monthly maintenance (grass cutting) of the naturalized pathway on the west side of the Creek; it is anticipated the County would see minor increased costs with monthly grass cutting of the rehabilitated pathway on the east side of Thompson Creek. This will require a levy increase in the Tax Supported Operating Budget. Future capital replacement or repair of assets—through a partnership with the community groups—will impact the County’s existing long-range capital funding plan.

STAKEHOLDER IMPACTS:

This application was assessed and supported by the Community Partnership Program’s Staff Review Team, which is comprised of staff from all County Divisions. Staff from the Facilities and Parks Operations Division conducted a site visit/inspection of the location to assess the condition of the parklands and naturalized trails and provided assistance in determining specifications and risk management for the project.

As well, the Dunnville Horticultural Society and its partners have been working with the Grand River Conservation Authority and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry.

REPORT IMPACTS:

Agreement: No

By-law: No

Budget Amendment: Yes

Policy: No

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Project Location – Dunnville Centennial Park and Thompson Creek Restoration Area.