



## Administration and Operations Committee Report

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**To:** The Chair and Members of the Administration and Operations Committee  
**From:** Kathy Ballantyne, Director – Facilities and Special Projects  
**Date:** July 16, 2024  
**Report #:** RPT-0146 -24  
**Subject:** Newport River Access  
**Purpose:** For Information and Direction

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### Recommendation

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That the Newport River Access Project be cancelled;

That Staff be directed to assess, and report back to Committee, the viability of sale of the Property, or other potential uses for the Property;

That the donation received from BWF, in the amount of \$50,000, be returned to BWF;

That the cost for Property acquisition, in the amount of \$89,592, be funded via the Property Reserve and that any remaining TIRA reserve funds previously approved be returned to that fund;

That staff be directed to cancel CPS-RFT-22-01 Newport River Access Point in the amount of \$219,032.09 + HST as awarded to South Brant Excavating, March 22, 2022.

And further that the County of Brant support and assist Six Nations of the Grand River in the creation of new river access point if deemed viable.

### Strategic Plan Priority

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Strategic Priority 5 - Healthy, Safe, and Engaged Citizens

### Impacts and Mitigation

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#### Social Impacts

River-side areas on the Grand River and its tributaries have been utilized over the years by local residents for paddling and fishing. Natural spaces provide residents and tourists with opportunities to be physically and socially active. Participation in recreation builds community capacity, strengthens social networks, fosters community pride, and provides for safe spaces and active transportation corridors. Strong correlations exist between equitable access to recreation and physical and mental health. Recreational facilities and partnerships with sport and cultural organizations ensure community members can access a variety of services to stay healthy and live longer.

With a view to fostering and maintaining good relationships with Indigenous partners, as well as mitigating any potential future controversy surrounding proposed greenfield projects in the

County, Archaeological Assessments (AA) will continue to be a standard consideration by the County.

### Environmental Impacts

Recreation programs, parks and natural spaces provide a number of positive environmental impacts, including: reduction of pollution, promotion of clean air and water, preservation of open space, protection of the ecosystem and an increase in community pride.

### Economic Impacts

Investment in parks and recreation infrastructure protects our environment, promotes conservation, and can serve as a catalyst for economic sustainability.

Expenses for this project to date include;

Land purchase and appraisals	\$89,592
Consulting Services (design and archaeological)	\$59,392
Archaeological Monitoring	\$4,581
Allocated Wages	\$1,214
Fees and Taxes	970
Total	\$155,749

If the project were to proceed more funds would be required for a scoped Stage 3 AA estimated at \$22,000 – 32,000 for a scaled back alternate plan on the east side of Newport Road. A Stage 4 AA is highly likely to be also required to construct a viable river access point on Newport Road. A Stage 4 AA for the alternate plan, if required would be in the \$200,000 - \$420,000 range. The full original plan cost estimates for Stage 4 AA were \$450,000 – \$650,000.

## **Report**

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### Background

Following the award of the construction tender for the Newport River Access Project in 2022, Staff received an inquiry about the potential archaeological significance of the Property. After consideration of the Grand River Notification Agreement, and location of the Project, a Stage 1 AA was completed by Archaeological Consultants Canada (ACC).

Following the completion of the Stage 1 AA, ACC determined that a Stage 2 AA would be required, given the Property's location and the archaeologically rich nature of the Grand River and its shorelines.

Following completion of the Stage 2 AA, ACC reported that the Stage 2 AA produced 119 artifacts diagnostically indicative of a multicomponent archaeological site dating from 1200 B.C to roughly 1500 A.D. Attachment 2 to this report is a copy of the Stage 1 and Stage 2 AA report from ACC.

ACC further reported that a Stage 3 AA would be required. Council authorized this work to proceed in 2023 and the work was completed during the summer and fall. Indigenous monitoring was completed by both the Mississauga's of Credit First Nation and Six Nations of the Grand River. The Stage 3 AA was received in Q1 2024, and the study yielded 1,146 indigenous and 165 Euro-Canadian artifacts across an area that is 20m x 80m on the west side of Newport Road. The majority of artifacts recovered were rock fragments (detritus) consistent with the production and refinement of tools. Four formal tools and a small amount of pottery were discovered at the site.

### Analysis

Upon discovery that the project site yielded numerous artifacts in the Stage 3 AA and considering the substantial cost for a Stage 4 archaeological assessment, Community Services staff explored an alternate plan with the assistance of Operations staff.

Staff sent the proposed plan to AAC to determine the next steps. Because the alternate site is within close proximity to the original project site, a 70 m protective and monitoring area is required. As a portion of the alternate plan site is within the 70 m area, an additional scoped Stage 3 AA would be required to proceed. The estimated cost to complete these works is \$22,000 - \$32,000 including indigenous monitoring. Based on the artifact findings to date on the west side of Newport Road, ACC provided an opinion that there is a high probability of finding more artifacts during a Stage 3 AA of the alternate site which would then require a Stage 4 AA, estimated to cost between \$200,000 and \$420,000 in order to proceed with the construction of the river access point.

The alternate plan and project constraint information was sent to tourism representatives from Six Nations of the Grand River for comments, but none have been received. Staff met with Six Nations Tourism representatives to review the Stage 3 report implications and have begun discussions about supporting the creation of river access point located between Cockshutt Road river access point and Chiefswood Park. If a suitable location is located within Six Nations of the Grand River Territory, then equipment obtained for the Newport River access through a grant could be provided to Six Nations of the Grand River. County staff would also be amenable to assisting Six Nations of the Grand River with landscape design.

As this site requires a substantial investment to complete further archaeological assessment to proceed with the project, staff have recommend that the project be cancelled.

### Implications of Cancelling the Project

Total land acquisition costs incurred to date for the project are \$89,592, with \$36,592 being funded from the TIRA Reserve, and \$50,000 by a directed donation from BWF.

If the Project is cancelled and the \$50,000 donation is returned to BWF, the full purchase price for the Property could be funded by the TIRA Reserve, as was previously approved via report RPT-21-176.

Alternatively, the Property acquisition costs could be funded via the Property Reserve. Staff believe this is the most prudent approach to take if the Project is cancelled and the Property will not be used for river access or trail improvements. Funds previously allocated from the TIRA reserve would then be returned to that reserve for future development of trails and river access projects. The funds that would be returned are estimated at \$70,600.

County Legal Staff have confirmed that there are no identified issues with respect to the County's quality of title, nor anything which would prevent a sale of the Property. With Committee's direction, Staff will assess, and report back to Committee, the viability of sale of the Property, or other potential uses for the Property.

### Recommendations

Should Committee decide that canceling the project is the appropriate course of action, the following resolution is submitted for Committee's consideration:

That the Newport River Access Project be cancelled;

That Staff be directed to assess, and report back to Committee, the viability of sale of the Property, or other potential uses for the Property;

That the donation received from BWF, in the amount of \$50,000, be returned to BWF;

That the cost for Property acquisition, in the amount of \$89,592, be funded via the Property Reserve and that any remaining TIRA reserve funds previously approved be returned to that fund.

### Next Steps

Staff will continue to liaise and support Six Nations of the Grand River to locate and construct a river access point on territory land that will support residents and tourists who paddle and fish for recreation. If a viable location is selected, County staff will provide technical resources and amenities that will assist with the development of the site.

Improving and creating access to the Grand River for residents remains a high priority for Community Services. A new accessible river access point will be created in the Paris Grand subdivision as part of the trail network being constructed. This special landing point and will be available by special request for residents and visitors who require an accessible place to land prior to Penmans Dam.

Staff evaluate development opportunities for river access continuously and will bring forward viable projects at the appropriate time.

**Attachments**

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Stage 3 Archaeological Report

**Reviewed By**

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Phil Mete, General Manager, Community Services

Alison Newton, CAO

Cindy Stevenson, General Manager, Emergency & Protective Services

**Copied To**

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Heather Boyd, General Manager of Corporate Services

Heather Bailey, Manager of Budget and Long-term Financial Planning

Laura-Lynn Rouse, Purchaser

**By-law and/or Agreement**

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By-law Required

No

Agreement(s) or other documents to be signed by Mayor and /or Clerk

No