

CITY OF HAMILTON

PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT Planning Division

and

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

TO: Mayor and Members General Issues Committee	WARD(S) AFFECTED: WARDS 1, 13, and 15			
COMMITTEE DATE: November 21, 2012				
SUBJECT/REPORT NO: Cootes to Escarpment Park System - (Wards 1, 13, and 15)	Governance (PED08009(b) / PW12082)			
SUBMITTED BY: Tim McCabe General Manager Planning and Economic Development Department	PREPARED BY: Cathy Plosz (905) 546-2424 Ext. 1231			
Gerry Davis General Manager Public Works Department				
SIGNATURE:				

RECOMMENDATION

(a) That the contents of the draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) document for the Cootes to Escarpment Park System, attached as Appendix "B" to Report PED08009(b) / PW12082, be endorsed.

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- (b) That Public Works Department staff be authorized to prepare the final Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), in consultation with the Steering Committee and based on the contents of the draft MOU document, attached as Appendix "B" to Report PED08009(b) / PW12082.
- (c) That the City Manager be authorized to sign the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), on behalf of the City, when it is complete.
- (d) That the budget, shown in the contents of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) document, attached as Appendix "B" to Report PED08009(b) / PW12082, and City commitment to providing \$15,400 annually for three years from the Tax Stabilization Reserve be approved.
- (e) That the intention of the partners to pursue Provincial and/or Federal Government legislation to create the Park System, and authorization for the Public Works Department staff to work toward this objective with the other partners, be endorsed.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Cootes to Escarpment Park System (CEPS) is a collaborative initiative among ten local government and NGO partners (see Historical Background for list of partners) to protect, enhance, and connect natural lands in the Hamilton-Burlington Region. The proposed Cootes to Escarpment Park System covers an area of about 3,400 hectares (8,500 acres) between the Niagara Escarpment and Cootes Paradise/Hamilton Harbour. The study area is shown in Appendix "A".

The Steering Committee has, in the past year, turned its attention to governance. Governance refers to how an organization will be structured, and what procedures it will use to conduct its activities. This includes the ability to raise and manage funds, hold votes, make decisions, and hire staff. Having a governance structure in place is particularly important, because the Cootes to Escarpment Park System involves ten different partners who hold and manage land within the Park System.

The Steering Committee has held discussions with senior City staff and Councillors from all partners to explore the best approach to governance. The approach recommended in this Report was based on these discussions. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between partners is proposed, and the proposed contents of the MOU are outlined in Appendix "B". To move forward, staff is requesting approval of the contents of the MOU, and for direction to Public Works staff, through participation in the Steering Committee, to prepare the MOU. Staff is also seeking authorization for the City Manager to sign the MOU on behalf of the City when it is complete.

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Finally, staff is requesting approval to pursue discussions with Provincial and/or Federal Government Officials to explore options for special purpose legislation to create and protect the Cootes to Escarpment Park System.

Creating a new Park System signifies the importance of the natural lands and the intention of the partners to jointly work toward their long-term protection and sustainability. This will aid in attracting new support, and increasing awareness locally, nationally, and internationally. The CEPS will provide places close to home where Hamilton residents can experience nature, and pursue outdoor recreational activities.

Alternatives for Consideration - See Page 10.

FINANCIAL / STAFFING / LEGAL IMPLICATIONS (for Recommendation(s) only)

Financial:

To support the CEPS, the City of Hamilton, as a partner, is being asked to contribute \$15,400 annually for three years. This funding is being recommended to come from the Tax Stabilization Reserve. This annual funding would be used primarily to support the Secretariat Office, with one staff person responsible for coordinating the activities of the CEPS, conducting research, and seeking funding. After this three year period, financial contributions to the project will be re-assessed.

Staffing:

Staff from the Planning and Economic Development Department (Planning Division) and Public Works Department (Landscape Architectural Services Section) will continue to participate as members of the CEPS Steering Committee, with Public Works as the Corporate lead. Under the new MOU, this would be known as the Management Committee. Staff from other Sections will be asked to comment on activities, as required.

Legal:

There are no legal or policy implications. However, staff from Legal Services will be consulted in preparing the MOU.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND (Chronology of events)

Introduction

What is the Park System?

The Cootes to Escarpment Conservation and Land Management Strategy is a collaborative project focusing on the conservation and management of approximately 2,000 hectares of publicly-owned natural lands in Dundas, West Hamilton, Flamborough, and Burlington. The natural features of the study area include a portion of the Niagara Escarpment, and the lands and waters associated with Cootes Paradise

Marsh and Grindstone Creek. These areas are recognized for their significant biodiversity, vistas, and long cultural history.

Initiated in 2007, the Cootes to Escarpment Park System includes lands owned by the Royal Botanical Gardens, Conservation Halton, City of Burlington, Hamilton Conservation Authority, City of Hamilton, Halton Region, Hamilton Naturalists' Club, Bruce Trail Conservancy, and McMaster University. Staff from the Hamilton Harbour Remedial Action Plan Organization also participates on the Steering Committee. Since the beginning of the project, City of Hamilton staff from Planning and Economic Development (Community Planning and Design Section) and later, Public Works (Environment and Sustainable Infrastructure Division), have represented the City of Hamilton on the Steering Committee.

The vision for the Park System arose from extensive background research and community and stakeholder engagement. It is articulated in the *Cootes to Escarpment Park System Conservation and Land Management Strategy*, which was released in October 2009, and contains the vision, mission, and objectives for the Park System, as well as a number of implementation actions. This document, often referred to as the Phase II Report, was endorsed by the Boards and Councils of the partner agencies, and continues to serve as the primary strategy for the Park System. The City of Hamilton endorsed the Phase II Report on February 9, 2010 (Report PED08009(a)).

Chronology of Events:

The following summary outlines the stages of this project:

- The Strategy was prepared in two phases. Phase I took place in 2007, and involved collecting information on the physical, social, and economic characteristics of the study area. In a previous Report to the Economic Development and Planning Committee (PED08009), staff provided an overview of the Phase I Report.
- Phase II involved a public consultation program to assist in identifying issues, developing a vision, concept plans, and management recommendations for the study area. On January 30, 2009, staff provided an Information Update on this phase of the project to the Economic Development and Planning Committee.
- The Phase II Strategy Report was completed late in 2009, and the Economic Development and Planning Committee endorsed this Report at its meeting on February 9, 2010 (PED08009(a)).
- On January 14, 2011, an Information Report provided an update on the activities in 2010.

- On April 23, 2012, another Information Report outlined the progress of the project, including a Land Securement Strategy, a Communications and Marketing Plan, and exploring governance options.
- In 2012, the Steering Committee turned its attention to governance, and this is the focus of this Report.

Benefits of the Park System:

The Park System contains natural lands and open spaces that are high in diversity and contain more than 50 species at risk. It is the last intact ecological connection between the Lake Ontario wetlands and the Niagara Escarpment, and is widely recognized for its ecological and cultural significance. The area is important to the people of Hamilton and Burlington as a place close to home where they can experience nature, and pursue outdoor recreation activities.

However, the urban growth and intensification expected in the future will place greater demand on natural areas for recreation and education. A coordinated effort to steward these lands is necessary to ensure their wise use and protection. By working together, the partners will be able to augment what they are already doing, through collaboration on new joint activities and attracting new resources.

Creating a new Park System signifies the importance of the natural lands in the Park System area, and the intention of the partners to jointly work towards their long-term protection and sustainability - aiding in attracting new support, and increasing awareness locally, nationally, and internationally. With the exception of the Royal Botanical Gardens, the lands in the Park System are only a part of the land holdings and jurisdictions of the other partners. Creating a new Park System will bring new focus to these lands.

By supporting the Cootes to Escarpment Park System, the City of Hamilton realizes the following benefits:

- The project showcases Hamilton as a green, healthy, livable City;
- A protected public urban park system, which includes some of the most biologically and culturally significant lands in Canada, and provides vital recreational and educational opportunities;
- Hamilton works cooperatively with other agencies and non-government organizations to effectively use limited resources to achieve its vision for the Park System; and,

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 Protecting and managing natural areas will sustain them for the enjoyment of future generations, and will provide economic benefits (improved air and water quality, carbon cycling, providing scenic views, and ecotourism).

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

There are no policy implications associated with the recommendations in this Report. The current Local Official Plans and policies, and the Niagara Escarpment Plan lend themselves to supporting the proposed park system.

RELEVANT CONSULTATION

In preparing this Report, Planning and Public Works staff has consulted with the City of Hamilton's Senior Management Team, the City Manager's Office, and the three Ward Councillors (Wards 1, 13, and 15) within the CEPS.

There has also been extensive input from staff, and Council and Board members from the partner organizations, including the City of Burlington, Region of Halton, Royal Botanical Gardens, Hamilton Conservation Authority, Conservation Halton, Bruce Trail Conservancy, Hamilton Naturalists' Club, Hamilton Harbour Remedial Action Plan Organization, and McMaster University.

ANALYSIS / RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

(include Performance Measurement/Benchmarking Data, if applicable)

Governance

The Steering Committee has, in the past year, turned its attention to governance. Governance refers to how an organization will be structured, and what procedures it will use to conduct its activities. This includes the ability to raise and manage funds, make decisions, develop a work plan, and hire staff.

The Cootes to Escarpment Park System presents a special challenge for management and protection. Public lands within the Park System are owned by three municipalities, two Conservation Authorities, the Bruce Trail Conservancy, McMaster University, Royal Botanical Gardens, and the Hamilton Naturalists' Club. Since the partners differ in their mandate, availability of resources, and organizational structure, it is important to have a Memorandum of Understanding in place.

Governance model development has involved background research, expert consultation, and a full-day retreat in June 2011, to explore the functions that would be undertaken by a fully realized park system, discussions with staff and decision-makers from the partner agencies, and preparation of background reports and a draft table of contents for the Memorandum of Understanding (see Appendix "B").

Proposed Governance Structure:

Based upon this work, the Steering Committee proposes an initial governance model that will allow formal creation of the Park System, and provide a framework for joint decision-making and accountability without requiring changes to existing plans and legislation, creating a new agency, or requiring the partners to give up ownership and control of their lands. This initial governance structure is shown on the figure attached as Appendix "C". The model consists of three parts: a Governing Council, a Management Committee, and a Secretariat.

Oversight and strategic planning will be provided by a Governing Council consisting of senior decision-makers or elected officials from each of the participating partner agencies. The Management Committee will consist of management-level staff from each of the partner agencies, playing a role similar to that of the current Steering Committee. The Management Committee will be responsible for implementation of strategic directions, objectives, and activities identified by the Governing Council. A small Secretariat Office of dedicated staff will lead and coordinate Park System activities. The Secretariat will report to the Chair of the Management Committee, and will be responsible for managing administration, projects, and programs, as directed by the Management Committee and Governing Council.

The initial governance structure will not involve the creation of a new stand-alone agency. This means that any funds obtained for the Park System will be held and managed by individual partners on behalf of the others. Similarly, Park System staff, contracts, and resources will be held and managed by individual partners on behalf of the others. This will be undertaken on a voluntary basis, and with the approval of the Governing Council.

This initial governance structure is proposed as a first step, as the minimum level of agreement and collaboration among the partners to permit formal establishment of the Park System. It will provide a framework for the participating agencies to work together in jointly planning and managing the Park System. Over time, the partners may find that this governance structure is suitable for long-term management of the Park System, or they may decide that an alternative model, such as a stand-alone agency, is needed. In the latter case, the initial governance structure will provide a framework to allow the partners to collectively develop and implement a new governance structure for the long-term.

Memorandum of Understanding:

The Steering Committee proposes a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) among the partners to serve as a founding agreement to formally establish the Park System. The draft contents of this MOU are outlined in Appendix "B". Once the partner Boards and Councils have approved the contents of the MOU, the appropriate staff from the partner agencies will work together to develop the actual agreement. At this time, staff is seeking endorsement of the contents of the MOU.

Legal and other appropriate staff from the partner agencies will work together to develop a MOU document that is acceptable to all of the partners. It is suggested that one partner volunteers its staff to draft the agreement, which would then be reviewed and refined by staff in the other partner agencies. The CEPS Project Manager would provide support, as needed, and facilitate the development and review of the agreement. Therefore, staff is requesting authorization from Council to participate in the development of the MOU based on the contents in Appendix "B".

Finally, once the MOU is completed, to the satisfaction of staff at all partner agencies, staff is requesting that the City Manager be given the authority to approve and sign the MOU on behalf of the City.

Special Purpose Legislation

Special purpose legislation is one option for creating and sustaining a Park System. There are many options for special purpose legislation. For example, the Steering Committee could approach the Provincial Government for legislation to enable the powers of the <u>Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, 2006</u> to be applied to these lands.

The Steering Committee would like to pursue discussions with Provincial and Federal Government Officials, to explore options for special purpose legislation to implement the vision for the Park System and assist in securing funding. Options will be brought back to the partners for discussion and approval, as appropriate.

Therefore, staff is requesting that Council endorse the stated intention to pursue Provincial and/or Federal Government legislation, and to authorize Public Works Department staff to work with the CEPS partners towards this objective, as appropriate.

Funding and Staff Resources

Annual financial contributions are requested from each of the partners to cover the costs of the Secretariat and associated activities for the three years 2013-2015, as shown in the budget in Schedule 1 of Appendix "B". Contributions are equal among most of the partners, at \$15,400 per year, for three years, for a total contribution of \$46,200. (The exception is much smaller contributions requested from the Bruce Trail

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Conservancy and the Hamilton Naturalists' Club. The smaller contributions are in recognition of the relatively limited financial resources of the two organizations, and the significant non-financial contributions they make to the Park System initiative). The three years of committed support will enable the partners to begin to implement the Park System and achieve its objectives, and in so doing, be better able to define the long-term requirements of the Park System implementation.

The Secretariat is proposed based on the successful experience of the Hamilton Harbour Remedial Action Plan, in which a small Secretariat Office coordinates and supports a large and complex collaborative program, involving numerous partners. This model leverages a modest investment to attract new resources and generate activities that could not be undertaken by the partners on their own.

A program plan has been prepared for the next three years (2013-2015). During this time, the Cootes to Escarpment Park System Steering Committee expects to achieve the following:

- Land management plans for the six core areas of the Park System;
- Joint fundraising and new resources;
- Habitat restoration and management projects;
- Inventories of natural and cultural heritage resources, augmenting what already exists (e.g. Nature Counts) by filling in data gaps;
- Education and awareness programs;
- Consistent signage and interpretive panels throughout the Park System;
- Federal and Provincial Government awareness and support;
- Working and effective framework for joint decision-making; and,
- Effective identity for the Park System that signifies its importance and attracts support.

In this period, efforts will continue to focus on foundation-building, including securing new resources, pursuing special purpose legislation, engaging community members and stakeholders, fostering land securement and stewardship, and preparing joint management plans for core areas of the Park System. Progress will also be made towards new joint initiatives to enhance existing programs and fill in gaps related to habitat restoration, invasive species control, ecological inventories and environmental monitoring, education and interpretation, and cultural heritage inventory and protection.

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To support the activities of the Cootes to Escarpment Park System, staff is requesting that Council endorse the budget, shown in Schedule 1 to Appendix "B", and commit to providing funds, as outlined.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

(include Financial, Staffing, Legal and Policy Implications and pros and cons for each alternative)

As an alternative to the recommendations, the General Issues Committee/Council could choose to:

1. <u>Not endorse the Contents of the Memorandum of Understanding and not direct staff to prepare the MOU</u>:

One option would be to not endorse the draft contents of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) (see Appendix "B"), and direct staff to not prepare a MOU for CEPS. This option is not recommended, as the City has made a commitment to the implementation of the CEPS, and the MOU is important to outline how the partner agencies will work together.

Another option is to alter the information to be contained in the Memorandum of Understanding. The draft contents of the MOU (see Appendix "B") represent the information that staff from the partner agencies believe should be included. If information needs to be added or removed, the General Issues Committee can recommend making these changes to Appendix "B". The contents document will form the basis for the MOU, which staff will prepare, and it can be revised to include any information or provisions that the General Issues Committee or Council deems appropriate.

2. Not authorize the City Manager to sign the MOU on behalf of the City:

Apart from the City Manager, there are a number of other options for who could be responsible for signing the MOU on behalf of the City. For example, other senior staff could be delegated this authority, such as the General Manager of Public Works. The MOU could also be signed by the Mayor or another political representative.

It is recommended that the City Manager sign the MOU, as the CEPS is a Corporate Initiative.

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3. <u>Not approve providing financial support of \$15,400 annually to fund a Secretariat</u>
Office to ensure that implementation of the CEPS proceeds:

This alternative is not recommended. At this time, all of the project partners have been asked to contribute between \$1,100 and \$15,400 annually to support the project for the next three years. Since the City of Hamilton is a key partner in the CEPS, it would be appropriate to make this three year financial commitment to move the implementation of the Park System vision forward.

If this alternative is chosen, it is possible that the City of Hamilton would be the only one of the partners not providing financial support. This would be of particular concern, because much of the study area lies within the City's boundaries.

By contributing financially to the CEPS, it would demonstrate that the City of Hamilton values the preservation of the biodiversity, ecological functions, and the recreational use and enjoyment of this highly significant area. After the three year commitment, there will be an opportunity to re-assess the financial contribution to the CEPS, based on the progress achieved.

4. <u>Not authorize staff to pursue Provincial and/or Federal Legislation to create the CEPS:</u>

This alternative is not recommended, as discussions with Federal and Provincial staff may offer a sound alternative for long-term recognition and protection of the CEPS. This is also a cost-effective means to protect the lands, as the Federal and Provincial Governments may provide support, as well as protective legislation.

CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN (Linkage to Desired End Results)

Focus Areas: 1. Skilled, Innovative and Respectful Organization, 2. Financial Sustainability, 3. Intergovernmental Relationships, 4. Growing Our Economy, 5. Social Development, 6. Environmental Stewardship, 7. Healthy Community

Financial Sustainability

 Delivery of municipal services and management capital assets/liabilities, in a sustainable, innovative, and cost-effective manner.

Intergovernmental Relationships

Maintain effective relationships with other public agencies.

Environmental Stewardship

Natural resources are protected and enhanced.

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Healthy Community

• Adequate access to food, water, shelter and income, safety, work, recreation and support for all (Human Services).

APPENDICES / SCHEDULES

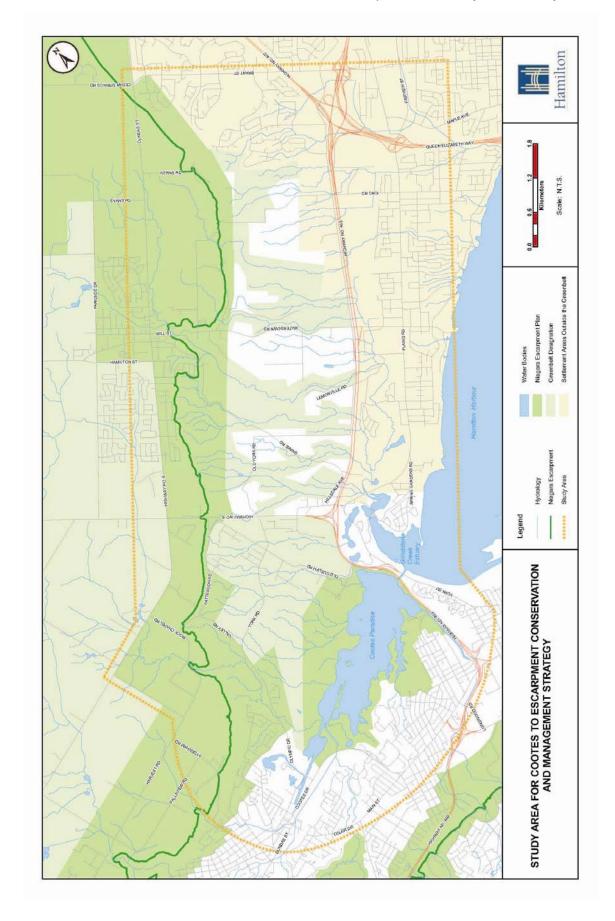
• Appendix "A": Map of CEPS Study Area

• Appendix "B": Draft Table of Contents for Memorandum of Understanding

• Appendix "C": Figure of Proposed Governance Structure

:CP

Attachs. (3)



This document provides the substantive content (but not the specific wording) of a Memorandum of Understanding concerning the Cootes to Escarpment Park System.

Purpose of MOU:

- Establish the Cootes to Escarpment Park System.
- Establish a framework for joint decision-making among the parties.
- Affirm the intention of the parties to seek special recognition provincially, federally, and internationally, as may be appropriate, and to seek outside funding for projects and programs supportive of the Park System as a collaborative of the partner agencies.
- Affirm commitments of financial and in-kind support from each party.

Cootes to Escarpment Park System:

The Cootes to Escarpment Park System is a collaborative initiative amongst the parties to protect, connect, and restore natural lands between the Niagara Escarpment and Cootes Paradise/Hamilton Harbour, and to provide ecologically compatible recreation, education, and research opportunities on lands within Park System.

The parties acknowledge the definition of Park System lands set out in the Cootes to Escarpment Park System Conservation and Land Management Strategy, and acknowledges that new lands will be added to the Park System from time-to-time.

Each party commits to participate as a partner in the Cootes to Escarpment Park System, which involves participating in the Governing Council and the Management Committee, making cash and in-kind contributions, and participating in Cootes to Escarpment Park System initiatives.

Framework for Joint Decision-Making:

The Cootes to Escarpment Park System will inform, but not replace or supersede, the land management and other responsibilities of the parties, and will not supersede the legal rights and responsibilities of private and public land owners.

Each party determines how Park System matters and decisions link to its internal organizational and decision-making structure, including consultation with and approvals from its Board or Council.

The Park System is to be governed by two bodies: Governing Council and Management Committee. Each party has one representative on each of the two bodies, respectively.

Governing Council:

- One senior decision-maker or elected official from each of the parties, with authority to make significant decisions and secure commitments on behalf of partner organization.
- Responsible for governance and strategic planning, significant legal or financial matters.
- Meets 2-3 times per year.

Management Committee:

- One management-level representative from each of the parties, with authority to make operational decisions and commitments on behalf of partner organization.
- Responsible for implementation of strategic directions, objectives, and activities set by the Governing Council, and decisions taken by the Governing Council.
- Meets regularly (e.g. monthly).

<u>Framework for Joint Decision-Making:</u> (continued)

Secretariat, consisting of Park System Coordinator (and other staff, as needed) coordinates and undertakes administration, projects, and programs. Reports to Chair of Management Committee

Hamilton Harbour Remedial Action Plan Coordinator, while not a party to MOU, is invited to be non-voting resource member of both the Governing Council and Management Committee.

Special Legislation:

Parties agree to seek special legislation from the Ontario and Federal Governments for one or more of the following:

- Officially create/recognize the Park System.
- Recognize the significance of natural and cultural heritage.

- Designate particular geographic area as the Cootes to Escarpment Park System.
- Confer particular powers on parties for application on Park System lands through specific park/protection area legislation (e.g. powers under the Ontario Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act)

Contributions:

Parties agree to commit cash and in-kind resources, as needed. Cash contributions specified in schedule to agreement (see Schedule 1 below).

Cash contributions will be held by one of the parties on behalf of the others. Funds will be managed by Park System Coordinator, subject to policies and procedures of party holding the funds. Park System Coordinator will produce detailed Financial Report annually.

Work Plans:

Work plans will be prepared by the Management Committee and Park System Coordinator to achieve the vision, mission, and objectives articulated in the Cootes to Escarpment Park System Conservation and Land Management Strategy.

Reporting and Review:

There will be regular reporting and review of progress.

Term of Agreement:

3-years, renewable, with written consent of parties.

Termination:

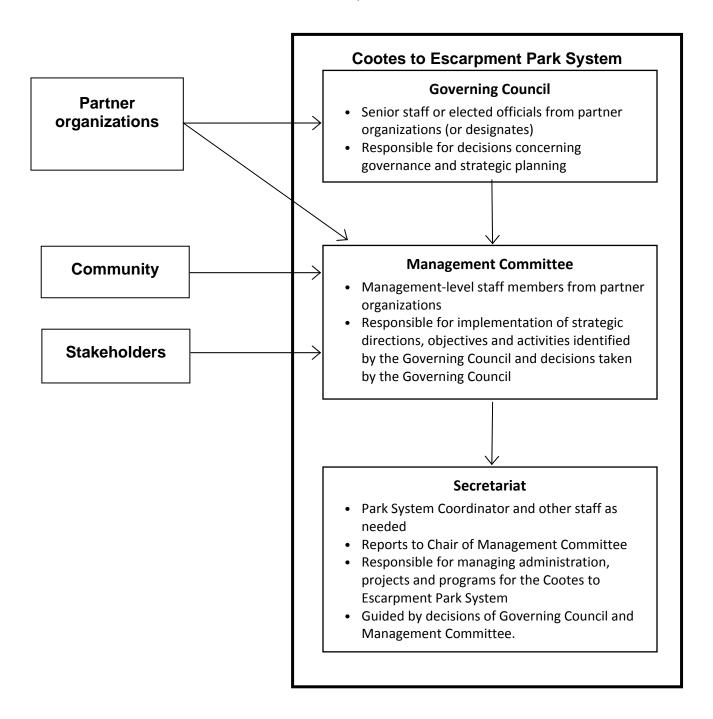
90-days written notice for party to leave agreement; immediate if party becomes insolvent or ceases operations.

Appendix "B" to Report PED08009(b) / PW12082 (Page 4 of 4) Draft Contents for Memorandum of Understanding for the CEPS

Schedule 1

Financial Contributions from Parties: 2013 - 2015						
	2013	2014	2015	Total		
Bruce Trail Conservancy	1,100	1,100	1,100	3,300		
City of Burlington	15,400	15,400	15,400	46,200		
City of Hamilton	15,400	15,400	15,400	46,200		
Halton Conservation Authority	15,400	15,400	15,400	46,200		
Halton Region	15,400	15,400	15,400	46,200		
Hamilton Conservation Authority	15,400	15,400	15,400	46,200		
Hamilton Naturalists' Club	1,100	1,100	1,100	3,300		
McMaster University	15,400	15,400	15,400	46,200		
Royal Botanical Gardens	15,400	15,400	15,400	46,200		
TOTAL CONTRIBUTIONS	110,000	110,000	110,000	330,000		

Operating Budget 2013 - 2015						
	2013	2014	2015	Total		
Staff salaries and benefits						
Park System Coordinator	81,250	82,000	82,800	246,050		
Land Stewardship and Securement	10,000	10,000	10,000	30,000		
Operating supplies & expenses						
Office space leasing cost (in-kind contribution)	0	0	0	0		
Office supplies, postage	1,050	1,000	1,000	3,050		
Communications materials	5,000	7,000	6,500	18,500		
Telephone and Internet	3,000	3,000	3,000	9,000		
Computer costs	4,000	1,000	1,000	6,000		
Meeting expenses	2,000	2,000	2,000	6,000		
Travel	1,000	1,300	1,000	3,300		
Finance and administration	2,700	2,700	2,700	8,100		
Total: Operating supplies & expenses	18,750	18,000	17,200	53,950		
TOTAL OPERATING COSTS	110,000	110,000	110,000	330,000		



Memorandum of Understanding articulates responsibilities and relationships among the Parties.