



PARKS, FACILITIES AND RECREATION SERVICES

Staff Report

REPORT NO: PFRS 2022-13

TO: Council

SUBMITTED BY: Sandy Jackson, Director of Parks, Facilities and Recreation Services

PREPARED BY: Sandy Jackson, Director of Parks, Facilities and Recreation Services
Harold O’Krafka, Director of Development Services
Jeff Molenhuis, Director of Public Works and Engineering

REVIEWED BY: Sharon Chambers, CAO

DATE: March 28, 2022

SUBJECT: Mike Schout Wetlands Project Update

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report PFRS 2022-13 be received for information; and further

THAT Staff be directed to explore the opportunity to relocate the side rails of the Bridge Street Bridge to the Mike Schout Wetlands; and further

THAT Staff be directed to work with Mr. Schout and Schout Corporation to seek sponsorship and/or donations to cover the cost of relocating and installing the Bridge Street Bridge side rails within the Wetlands; and

THAT staff be directed to report back to Council should sufficient funds be raised to include components of the Bridge Street Bridge in the Wetlands project design.

SUMMARY:

This report seeks support to explore moving the side rails of the Bridge Street Bridge to the Mike Schout Wetlands Preserve and incorporate it into the pedestrian boardwalk design as an aesthetic feature. This proposal is dependant on utilizing some of the funds identified in the Bridge Street Bridge Capital project for tear down and potential transportation to the Wetlands site and obtaining sponsorship and / or donations to fund the engineering and installation of the side rails within the Wetlands.

BACKGROUND:

On January 17, 2022, staff report PWE 2022-02 which recommended the removal and replacement of the Bridge Street Bridge was approved by Council. The following formed a key part of the resolution passed by Council:

THAT staff be directed to further investigate the relocation of the existing structure within the Township, and prior to calling the tender for construction, report back to Council with a recommendation.

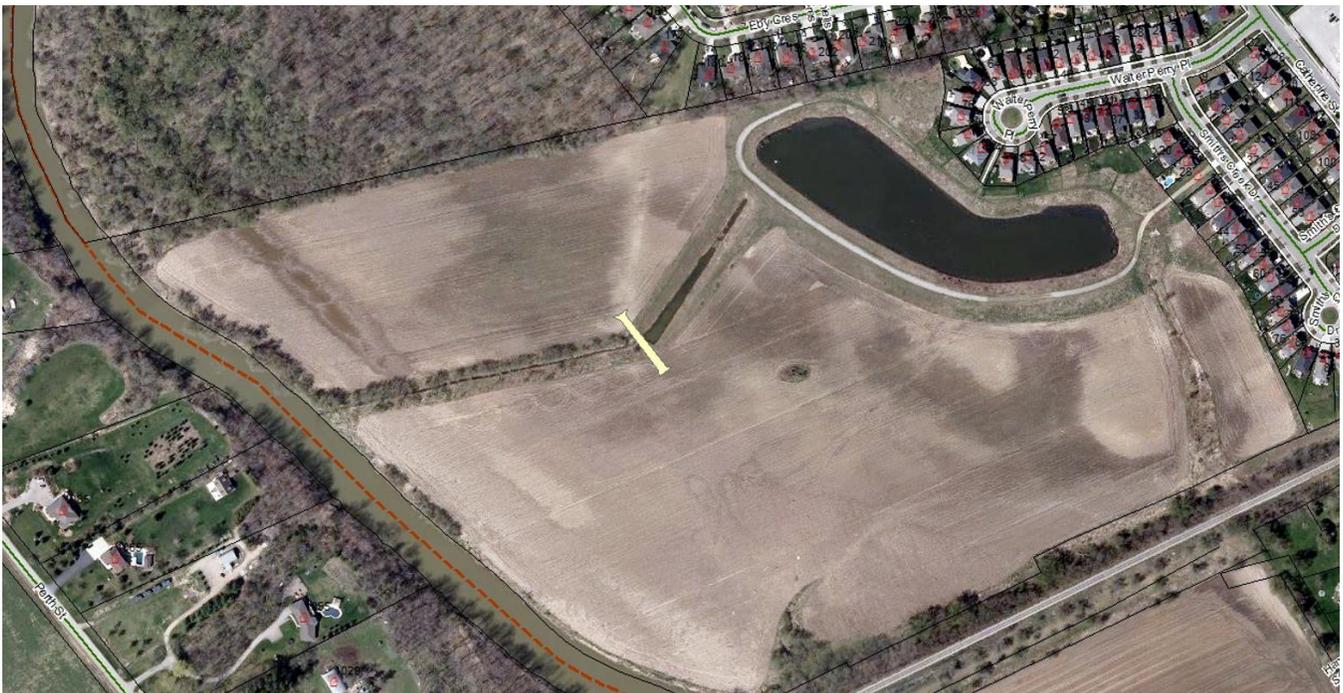
Through the course of the Environmental Assessment process in Q4 2021, staff held discussions with the Heritage Wilmot Advisory Committee, specific to the relocation option of the structure. The committee specifically requested investigating the relocation of the bridge, or a portion of the bridge to a trail or to the Mike Schout Wetlands Preserve project in a staff meeting in December 2021. At that time leading up to the Council report in January 2022, and in the time following, staff have been working through logistics to determine a feasible framework for Council to consider the opportunity of relocating a portion of the structure to this location.



REPORT:

The Mike Schout Wetlands Preserve project includes a planned 1.5 km boardwalk to complement the development of the wetland's ponds, tree planting and pollinator plantings. The project is scheduled to be complete by the end of the summer or early autumn. During a recent Wetlands discussion, staff indicated to the team that the Bridge Street Bridge was being replaced in 2022. Mr. Schout and the design team expressed interest in exploring the possibility of relocating a portion of the bridge to the Wetlands. The team felt this location was ideal for showcasing and preserving the side rails over a portion of the planned boardwalk. The suggestion focused on the side rails and some of the overhead structural supports versus the whole bridge. This would allow for easier dismantling and transportation to the site.

As a result of the interest in this opportunity, staff reached out to the Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA) to seek their input into the impact that adding this feature to the Wetlands would have on the existing permit for this project. GRCA staff indicated they had no issues with this addition should it be approved, and that a minor amendment to the permit would be required as well as a refined plan showing the proposed location, details about any supporting grading and pier placement. GRCA staff expressed that the bridge is an important cultural feature within the Grand River watershed and supports the national status of the Grand River and its major tributaries (including the Nith River) as Canadian Heritage Rivers.



The proposed location for the bridge side rails is approximated in the photo above and will span a small tributary within the Wetlands that is along the planned boardwalk. Although the bridge is approximately 164 feet long and 14 feet wide, the 55-acre property is ideal to host

this impressive structure without it looking out of place and will create a focal point within the property.

The approved Capital project to remove and replace the Bridge Street Bridge includes funds for the demolition/dismantling of the existing bridge, and anticipated storage or relocation costs. Should Council support this report, Parks, Facilities and Recreation staff will work with Public Works and Engineering staff to seek detailed costs for dismantling the bridge and potentially relocating it to the Wetlands.

Mr. Schout has indicated that seeking sponsorship and/or donations to support the cost of reinstalling the side rails of the bridge within the Wetlands would be the preferred funding approach as this component was not contemplated when the project commenced. Staff will work with Mr. Schout to assist with this process should Council approve this report.

Staff will also present this concept to Heritage Wilmot to seek their support and assistance with the fundraising should they support this idea.

ALIGNMENT WITH THE TOWNSHIP OF WILMOT STRATEGIC PLAN:

Relocating this culturally significant bridge to the Mike Schout Wetlands supports the Strategic Goals of Quality of Life, Responsible Government and Environmental Protection.

Development of the Mike Schout Wetlands Preserve was identified as a specific strategic action within the Council approved Strategic Plan.

ACTIONS TOWARDS UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS:

Good Health and Well-Being.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

The amendment to the GRCA permit will cost the Township \$90 and will be funded through the Parks and Facilities operating budget, while costs to dismantle the Bridge will be included in the Bridge Street Bridge capital project.

Costs for re-installation of the bridge are not expected to impact the tax base as efforts will be made to find local sponsors and/or donors to fund the installation. Should any costs be required for this bridge relocation, staff will bring a report back to Council to seek approval.

ATTACHMENTS:

N/A