



TOWNSHIP OF EDWARDSBURGH CARDINAL ACTION ITEM

Committee: Committee of the Whole – Community Development

Date: June 5, 2023

Department: Community Development

Topic: Agricultural LEAR Consultation

Purpose: To provide feedback on the draft Land Evaluation and Area Review (LEAR) report and the resultant mapping, that will be used to identify the agricultural areas in Edwardsburgh Cardinal and throughout the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville. This is an opportunity to apply local knowledge and comment to refine the agricultural system map.

Background: The United Counties of Leeds and Grenville is undertaking an Agricultural Land Evaluation and Area Review (LEAR). Committee received an introduction to the review at the March 6th Committee meeting. A LEAR is the method used to determine the designation of prime agricultural areas. This review is required as part of the next Counties Official Plan, expected in 2026.

The LEAR is being completed by Planscape, in conjunction with a Technical Advisory Committee, made up of municipal planning staff across Leeds Grenville, members of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and various Ministry representatives. The team is now entering stage 2 of the review process, having released a draft report and mapping for public consultation.

The LEAR system was developed by the Province and the methodology requires factors to be selected and weighted to reflect local circumstances. The attached report by Planscape provides details on how Land Evaluation (LE) factors and Area Review (AR) factors are determined and weighted to identify prime agricultural areas using a scoring system. The LE factors apply to physical components such as soil quality, while the AR factors apply to socio-economic considerations such as fragmentation and recognition of surrounding lands in agricultural production. The inclusion of socio-economic factors allows for more than just the soil capability to be evaluated, as would be done if the prime agricultural areas were simply defined as areas where class 1 to 3 lands

predominate. The final score is weighted as 60% Land Evaluation (LE) and 40% Area Review (AR)

In reviewing the draft report and mapping, it is noted that a large area south of the 401 and north of County Rd 2 has been identified in the draft as a prime agricultural area. Much of this area has an LE factor of 40-60, meaning the land contains Class 1-3 soil. The AR factor is between 10-30, containing land that is already being farmed. This results in a score of 60-70, identifying a large area as prime agricultural lands that does not currently have this designation.

Most of these lands are currently designated Rural Policy Area in the Township's Official Plan, but some Highway Commercial Policy Area and Future Industrial Park Expansion Area lands were also included. Because of their strategic locations and proximity to transportation infrastructure, Highway Commercial and industrial Park lands are designated for non-agricultural uses. As such, Committee and Council may wish to provide feedback on the draft report and mapping to recommend that these lands not be considered prime agricultural areas.

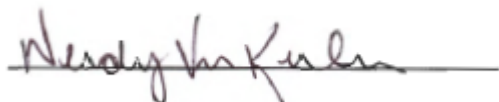
Consultation with stakeholders began early in the project and is ongoing. The second public consultation meeting is scheduled for June 21st. The Counties has requested feedback on this recent draft by June 30th. A letter has been drafted for Committee review and is attached to this report. There is a dedicated webpage with more information on the study, where residents and stakeholders can sign up for the mailing list to receive future communication:

<https://www.leedsgrenville.com/en/government/agriculture-area-review.aspx>

Policy Implications: It is anticipated that an amendment to the Counties Official Plan will take place upon completion of the study to reflect the findings. An amendment to the Township's Official Plan would then be required to bring it into conformity with the Counties Plan.

Financial Considerations: There are no financial considerations to provide feedback to on the draft report and mapping. If a future OP amendment is required, consultant fees will apply.

Recommendation: THAT Committee recommend that Council authorizes the Mayor to sign the attached letter and direct staff to submit the comment letter to the Counties prior to the June 30, 2023 deadline.



Community Development Coordinator