

Chronicle

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MUC green space policy will save Bois Franc

By BRUCE MCKEID
Chronicle Staff

An agreement to pay \$15 million for the Bois Franc forest in Dollard Des Ormeaux was the highlight of the MUC's long-awaited green space policy, approved by the planning commission at a special meeting Monday.

The policy, which must now be approved by MUC council on Dec. 20, calls for \$200 million over a minimum of 10 years for the acquisition of forested land, shoreline property and islands, the rezoning of land to a green status and the creation of a network of walking and cycling paths connecting the various regional parks in the territory.

While \$150 million will also buy everything else planned, commission chairman Robert Steward after the meeting. "We have to make decisions."

The Bois Franc was the only piece of land singled out in the policy for immediate acquisition. The 40-hectare forest has been the subject of intense lobbying by citizens' groups

over the last 18 months.

Steward announced at the meeting that an agreement had been reached that will see the MUC buy the 30 hectares of the forest owned by the Grilli Property Group Inc. for \$15 million. The other 10 hectares will be negotiated for separately with other owners.

Steward said that if the MUC council approves the policy next Wednesday night, the procedure for buying the land will begin immediately. Once bought, the land would become part of the Bois de Liessat Regional Park.

The natural coastal on the Bois Franc, the Bizard forest and Arroy à l'Orme forest in Ste. Anne de Belle-rue will expire here. Those towns have received final approval for their urban development plans and adopted zoning, construction and subdivision bylaws that conform to those of the MUC. However, Steward said the land that is still of interest to the MUC can be put under a further reserve to keep it protected while efforts are made to acquire them.

An MUC green space policy was to have been presented by the planning commission at its meeting in September but was taken off the agenda because the councillors said they hadn't had time to study this plan.

This plan called for \$500 million for the acquisition and management of new regional park space, more than twice the amount projected in the plan passed Monday night. The original plan received the enthusiastic support

of the Green Coalition, which represents more than 40 Montreal-area environmental groups.

"The other one was altogether too sweeping," Beaconsfield Mayor Pat (See MUC, Page 2)

— The Chronicle, Wednesday, December 13, 1989

MUC plans to buy Bois Franc

(From page 1)

Rosen, a member of the planning commission, said of the earlier plan.

Nicole David-Strauss of the Le Bizard Environment Committee expressed reservations about the new plan because it makes no guarantees for any land except the Bois Franc.

"It's a good law but it's not the only one," she said. "I'm sceptical about that plan."

Steward said she is concerned because recent proposals for the Le Bizard forest, most of the other ecologically valuable in the MUC, would also result in 50 hectares being lost to developers.

Negotiations between the MUC and

the Grilli Property Group are still going on for the Bois Franc land. An agreement has yet been reached.

Although he voted for it, commission member Pierre Goyet criticized the plan for being vague. He said it doesn't specify an amount of land or any time frame for which land will be bought.

The policy passed does list a handful of other measures that need to be taken to achieve its goals. One such measure calls for municipalities to have their own green plans that would be integrated with their urban development plans to facilitate an overall network of the density of vegetation in the territory.

The MUC will also be looking for provincial environmental groups to help

in raising money for the acquisition of land. It will require that Quebec change the Cities and Towns Act to permit municipalities to take at least 20 per cent of land for parks when a subdivision takes place. The law now calls for 10 per cent. Beaconsfield passed a similar resolution last month.

The MUC will also be looking for the provincial government to make financing possible by creating incentives such as tax-free conservation bonds and land banking.

The general theme of the policy will be to encourage municipalities within the MUC to maintain as much green space as possible. The MUC will also be

1989-10-10: Bois Franc, Dollard des Ormeaux City Hall, TheGazette



Jack Todd

Ordinary folk speak loudly to save forest

Take a forest.
 Stir in one greedy developer, a submissive city council, a co-operative mayor, a few bulldozers and a lot of combat.
 Subtract one forest.
 That's the way it has always worked in North America. Maybe a couple of shy folk would raise a timid hand in protest, but big money and big government would brush them aside like flies.
 No more.
 Tuesday night in Dollard des Ormeaux, 21st century landed in Mayor Ed Janiszewski's lap like one of those tall, pointy-headed Soviet aliens that had taken a wrong turn at Irkutsk.
 For a couple of years now, Janiszewski has been saying that it would be a real fine idea to bulldoze Dollard's Bois Franc forest, run a six-lane extension of de Salaberry Blvd. through it and maybe put up some high-rises.
 All this would make a filthy-rich developer named Mario Grilli even richer, and it would give Dollard more tax bucks along with more stress, more noise, more cars, more pollution and a heck of a lot fewer trees.
 But when 250 citizens stormed the council chambers in Dollard Tuesday to say "ixnay" loud and clear to bulldozing the forest, Janiszewski got the message. By the end of the evening, back-paddling like a man about to go over Niagara Falls in a canoe, Janiszewski was sounding like a dewy-eyed volunteer about to go on his first Greenpeace crusade.
 When the room cleared after 11 p.m. and the councillors finally got down to their regular meeting, a stunning resolution was passed: It called for Dollard to take whatever action is necessary to save the Bois Franc forest.

TODAY

Knock on wood: West Island residents are invited to attend a public meeting at 7 p.m. on plans for the building of high-density housing in the Bois Franc forest. The meeting will take place at Dollard des Ormeaux city hall, 12001 de Salaberry Blvd.

Land not rezoned

The resolution appears to put an end to a two-year battle over the forest. The council did not, however, rezone the 150 acres in question from orange to green, meaning that when the MUC moratorium expires on Dec. 31, Grilli could call in the heavy machinery.
 That's cause for concern, but it appears the council is serious about saving the forest.
 As the meeting went on, it was clear that several councillors were uncomfortable with the mayor's position, and at the end of the consultation councillors Rick Leckner and Glenn Cuddy were doing their best to smooth things over with the environmentalists so that both sides could work together to preserve the Bois Franc.
 It's a big victory for the Citizens for the Bois Franc and the Green Coalition, but what happened Tuesday night had a lot to do with the ordinary citizens of Dollard, who turned out in force.
 At times, the environmental leaders — frustrated, angry, and ready for battle — almost needed to be saved from themselves. One of them even objected when the mayor attempted to recognize a couple of Girl Guides in the front row; but when one spoke, she told the mayor that he shouldn't worry about handing the tax burden of saving the forest to her generation.
 "I'd rather pay more tax," the 12-year-old said, "if I could still walk in the woods when I grow up."
 The girl got a standing ovation. She and her 13-year-old friend — who also spoke — were intelligent, level-headed and touching. I'm only sorry that they escaped before I could catch their names, because I think they turned the evening around.

'Build a tunnel under it'

There were others, ordinary citizens who spoke with force and eloquence.
 "If you want to touch the Bois Franc," one older man said, "do like other countries do. Build a tunnel under it."
 Rev. Robert Smith spoke briefly and with eloquence, perhaps adding the force of his collar to the pressure on Janiszewski.
 And finally Sylvia Olfemark — the woman who launched the whole thing in the first place and was once told by Janiszewski that he would win because he held all the cards — got to say her piece. She kidded Janiszewski for always calling her "Sylvia" instead of using her last name as he did when recognizing men in the audience.
 Then she pointed out that her name is Latin for "forest," while his reminded her of Janus, the Roman god with two faces and two mouths.
 Last night, Olfemark told me that she doesn't believe Janiszewski will be able to retreat from his new-found environmentalist position, because "now his face is on the line."
 Although some of the environmentalists won't agree with me, I don't think Ed Janiszewski is an ogre. He's a politician, and for some reason politicians have been agonizingly slow to catch up with the green movement. Like Brian Mulroney and Robert Bourassa, he obviously feels that John Q. Public doesn't give a damn about a silly old forest — but he's wrong.
 What was most remarkable about Tuesday night was that it was an exercise in democracy won by the people.
 In the end the message the mayor got was from ordinary folk — who now realize that this is the only planet we have.

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Les grands espaces verts de la CUM

C'est une vraie cathédrale...

YVON LABERGE

■ Tous ceux qui l'ont visité le diront: un bois comme ça, dans l'île de Montréal? C'est presque pas croyable!

Pourtant, il est bien là le Bois-Franc, appuyé contre le Bois-de-Liesse, à Dollard-des-Ormeaux, dans l'ouest de l'île.

La semaine dernière, quelqu'un disait: «C'est comme une cathédrale ce bois-là.» A bien y penser, c'est vrai! Le Bois-Franc, c'est une cathédrale. Une vraie, un brin moyenâgeuse. Vous y entrez et votre regard se fixe sur les voûtes, là, tout en haut.

Pourtant, le Bois-Franc appartient au groupe immobilier Grilli. Pas à la collectivité. Pas encore, mais ça va finir par arriver.

Sylvia Oljmark y croit et, depuis plusieurs mois, elle y consacre presque tout son temps. Il y a un mois, l'Ouest de l'île en vert et Loisir-Ville y avaient invité tout le monde. Ils étaient 3000 à répondre à l'appel. Sylvia Oljmark en est encore émue quand elle en parle.

Loisir-Ville tente de mettre sur pied un trust ou une fondation pour amasser une partie des fonds nécessaires à son acquisition. La facture sera lourde: environ \$10 millions. Pour y arriver, Québec devra y mettre sa part, la Communauté urbaine de Montréal aussi.

Pour Hubert Simard, président de la Commission de l'aménagement de la CUM, c'est un dossier à régler à moyen terme.

«Dans ce cas-là, le moyen terme, dit-il, c'est six mois. Les intervenants au dossier sont d'accord eux aussi. Le temps presse, il n'y a pas de temps à perdre.»

L'autre soir, à la Commission de l'aménagement, Sylvia Oljmark n'en menait pas large après avoir constaté que le tour du Bois-Franc n'était pas venu. En sirotant son café, elle glisse: «J'ai peur de perdre la bataille. Je suis déçue.»

Il y a quelques jours, elle avait repris confiance. Elle se rappelait que le Bois-Franc, s'il n'est pas protégé par le schéma d'aménagement de la CUM, l'est par le Règlement de contrôle intermédiaire.

Hubert Simard a d'ailleurs été catégorique là-dessus: le Bois-Franc est protégé par le règlement de contrôle et pas question de l'amender pour l'en exclure.

Pourquoi? Parce que, voyez-vous, on ne construit pas de bungalows ou des cottages dans une cathédrale. Même si on l'a déjà fait! □

Le Bois-Franc appartient au groupe immobilier Grilli.



PHOTO HENRIE MICHÈRE, La Presse

■ La Communauté urbaine prend le virage vert / page F 6

Au Bois-de-Liesse

La journée verte est un succès

La journée verte organisée par l'Association de «l'Ouest de l'île en vert» pour promouvoir la protection et la conservation des espaces verts du territoire de la CUM, a eu lieu le samedi 14 mai dernier. Les organisateurs évaluent à plus de 3 000 le nombre de personnes qui ont pris part à cette journée au cours de laquelle hot dogs et rafraichissements étaient servis sur le site de 14 heures à 19 heures. C'est à la maison Pitfield, à Pierrefonds, que les participants de-

vaient se rendre pour participer aux visites guidées. Des exposants écologiques étaient aussi de la partie sans oublier la visite guidée de la partie sud du Bois-de-Liesse jusqu'au ruisseau Bertrand soit la magnifique forêt de Bois-Franc dont l'avenir est incertain à cause de certains projets immobiliers. La Ville de Dollard-des-Ormeaux étudie présentement la possibilité de permettre à

un développeur de construire sur une grande partie de cette forêt. Au cours d'audience publiques de la CUM, celle-ci encourageait ses citoyens à adopter une politique de conservation des espaces verts en les invitant à se regrouper et à se former en trust par lequel ils achèteraient des terrains afin de souligner que la préservation des parcs régionaux ne concerne pas uniquement les gouvernements mais aussi tous les citoyens.

En plus du ski de fond l'hiver, le Parc régional du Bois-de-Liesse offrirait beaucoup de possibilités d'activités l'été. Ce serait bien dommage de sacrifier une fois de plus un espace vert aux mains de l'industrialisation! La journée du 14 mai a démontré que les citoyens s'intéressaient de plus en plus à la conservation d'espaces verts en milieu urbain. Le virage écologique n'est plus l'affaire d'une minorité mais bien un sujet qui intéresse tous les citoyens.

In Bois-de-Liesse

Green Day was a success

The Green Day, organized on May 14th by the Green Environment West Island Association to promote the conservation and protection of the green spaces in our Montreal Urban Community, was a huge success in Bois-de-Liesse. Organizers believe that more than 3,000 people took advantage of the weather to come to this event during which hot dogs and refreshments were served

from 2 pm to 7 pm while some clowns were entertaining the public. Exhibits organized by ecological groups and a guided tour of the Bois-de-Liesse's southern area where the beautiful Bois-Franc Forest is threatened to disappear because of real-estate projects, were some of the activities of the day. The City of Dollard-des-Ormeaux is presently studying the possibility

of allowing a promoter to build on a large part of the forest. During public hearings concerning the regional parks, the MUC's Environment Commission was attempting to form a Green Space Conservation policy by inviting citizens to create a trust by which they would purchase some land to show that the preservation of regional parks is not only the matter of the government but of everybody.

The Bois-de-Liesse regional park offers cross country skiing in winter and many summer activities could certainly be held in this ecologically rich land. Many citizens, who were visiting the park for the first time, were surprised to see just how beautiful the park is, and how it is difficult to believe one is still in the City when walking in this forest. It would be very unfortunate to sacrifice once again a green space to real-estate development. Green Day was organized to show that the land which might be given up for development is worth conserving and that the Island of Montreal is already behind most major urban centres in regards to green spaces. Most of the people who gathered at Pitfield House in Pierrefonds agreed that it was time to start saving these green spaces for future generations.



Many citizens took part in the Green Day guided tour of Bois-de-Liesse which took them to Bertrand Creek.



C'est par groupe de 30 à 40 personnes que l'on effectuait des visites guidées.



Gazette, James Deol

Hayley Nadler, 6, of St. Laurent admires trilliums in Bois de Liesse regional park during Sunday's festivities.

Sun lures thousands to Green Day celebration

By MELANIE CLULOW
of The Gazette

Thousands of people sporting shorts and summer hats turned up at Bois de Liesse Park in Pierrefonds last weekend to enjoy the sun and show their support for an island-wide forest conservation policy.

The occasion was Green Day, an afternoon in the park organized by a coalition of West Island environmentalist groups in conjunction with Montreal green space activists.

"It was a great success," co-organizer Sylvia Oljemark said.

"I hope our aims will be achieved and this won't have to become an annual event."

"We wanted our elected people to know that the public wants a conservation policy," Oljemark said.

"Now they do."

Thousands of people from all over the island arrived at the park by car, bus or bicycle to enjoy an afternoon of musical entertainment and hot-dogs barbecued by Dorval Mayor Peter Yeomans.

But people didn't show up just for the free food.

Twelve busloads of visitors took guided tours of the Bois Francs forest, which includes parts of Pierrefonds, St. Laurent and Dollard des Ormesux.

And Oljemark said the coalition had sent hundreds of letters of support

institutions and environmental groups across Quebec.

Students at Lakeview Elementary School in St. Laurent, for example, got together a petition urging government officials to "save the trees."

And film-maker Frédéric Back, who won an Academy Award in Los Angeles last month for his animated film *The Man Who Planted Trees*, made a special appearance, Oscar in hand, to plant a tree in the park.

Activists have been lobbying for a comprehensive conservation policy to protect the island's remaining woods from pollution and development, and to acquire more green space for public use.

the Montreal Urban Community — 11 of which are on the West Island.

In February, the MUC permitted Matrox Electronics Systems Inc. to expand its plant into 12 hectares of Bois de Liesse Park.

Other developers now are pressing the MUC for an additional portion of the wooded park.

And parts of forests on Nuns' Island and Ile Bizard are also threatened by development.

Oljemark said her particular concern is preservation of the 70-hectare (175-acre) Bois Francs forest, also coveted by developers.

"It's a mature hardwood forest," she said. "It has a cathedral effect; it's so peaceful, you have no idea