



**PORT COLBORNE**

**Subject: Oil Mill Creek Municipal Drain Report Update**

**To: Council**

**From: Public Works Department**

Report Number: 2025-22

Meeting Date: March 11, 2025

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**Recommendation:**

That Public Works Department Report 2025-22 be received; and

That staff advise the appointed engineer, Paul Marsh, P.Eng to move forward with the changes to the Oil Mill Creek Municipal Drain report and upon completion of the report, that Council direct the Drainage Superintendent to advance the Oil Mill Creek Municipal Drain Engineer's Report to a second 'Meeting to Consider,' in accordance with section 41, Chapter D.17 of the *Drainage Act*.

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**Purpose:**

The purpose of this report is to update Council on the status of the Oil Mill Creek Municipal Drain Engineer's Report, originally presented at the Meeting to Consider on September 3, 2024, and to seek Council's approval to proceed with mailing notices and scheduling a second Meeting to Consider following the completion of the revised report by the appointed engineer.

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**Background:**

At the September 3, 2024 Meeting to Consider, Council directed that the Oil Mill Creek Municipal Drain Engineer's Report be referred back to the engineer. The intent was to explore a redesign that reduces the scope of work to only what is necessary to modernize the report. This direction was largely in response to significant concerns raised by assessed landowners, many of whom opposed the proposed costs, particularly the costs associated with the wetland feature.

Additionally, Council requested that staff engage assessed landowners to determine if any were interested in constructing a wetland feature on their property.

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## **Discussion:**

Following Council's direction at the September Meeting to Consider, staff and the Engineer undertook a detailed review of the Oil Mill Creek Engineer's Report to identify ways to reduce costs while maintaining necessary improvements to the municipal drain. Staff considered several options to determine the most feasible and cost-effective approach, while still making sure the drain functions as needed.

After the report was referred back, staff sent letters (Appendix A) to all 209 assessed landowners on September 10, 2024, informing them of the reconsideration process and inviting feedback regarding their interest in having a wetland or storage feature on their private property by October 2, 2024. Four property owners contacted staff.

- One landowner expressed disinterest, stating they already had a pond and did not want additional features.
- Another initially showed interest but did not follow up further.
- The remaining two met with staff on November 13, 2024, to discuss the proposal but ultimately declined to have a wetland feature on their property.

The addition of private wetland features may have resulted in additional costs to the report as the design would still need to be incorporated into a revised version of the Engineer's Report.

Staff then undertook some key investigations to try and reduce scope of the report, as described below.

### Wetland Feature Removal

One of the significant cost drivers in the original report was an engineered wetland designed for water storage. This wetland increased the quantity of stormwater that the system could hold, improving it from a 1 in 2 year storm design to a 1 in 5 year storm design. Removing this wetland from the design would save approximately \$150,000 while still maintaining a 1 in 2 year storm design. City staff have applied for grants to construct the wetland feature within Centennial Park and will continue to do so to offset the cost of a future wetland installation which will increase the capabilities of the drainage system to a 1 in 5 year storm. This would eliminate the need for the drainage shed to pay for the wetland.

### West Branch Drain Rock Removal

Flooding has been a persistent issue for properties west of Pinecrest Road, with some landowners experiencing severe impacts in recent years. Staff reviewed the design and

concluded that rock removal remains essential to improving flow and mitigating future flooding.

### Outlet Flap-Gate Review

The existing flap gate at the outlet has withstood significant storm events over many years. However, due to its weight, it causes water to backup. The Report proposes solutions to this gate, which staff reviewed and recommend maintaining to ensure the gate functions as needed.

To balance cost reduction with necessary drainage improvements, staff also evaluated the following options:

- Install a pump system.
- Widen the drain (to improve capacity and flow).

Ultimately, the Engineer's proposed revised report will reflect a 'bare bones' approach, removing the wetland and prioritizing essential drainage improvements to align with Council's directive. Stormwater management is inherently expensive, and staff recognize the financial burden this places on property owners within the drainage area. The goal of this review was to find equitable solutions that balance cost with necessary improvements to the Oil Mill Creek. Modernizing the report was essential to ensure the drain functions effectively, and while cost reductions will be proposed in the updated version of the Oil Mill Creek report, there are unavoidable expenses associated with achieving proper drainage.

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### **Internal Consultations:**

Public Works staff have met internally to discuss the options to reduce the scope of work for the report.

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### **Financial Implications:**

The financial implications will be presented in the assessment schedule in the revised Oil Mill Creek Municipal Drain report at the Meeting to Consider. The removal of the wetland from the report is anticipated to result in a reduction of approximately \$150,000 in design and construction costs.

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### **Public Engagement:**

As directed by Council, staff mailed a notice to assessed landowners on September 10, 2024. The letter informed them that the report had been referred back to the Engineer

and invited those interested in donating land for a potential wetland feature. (See Appendix A.)

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### **Strategic Plan Alignment:**

The initiative contained within this report supports the following pillar(s) of the strategic plan:

- Sustainable and Resilient Infrastructure
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### **Conclusion:**

The proposed revised Engineer's Report will reflect Council's direction to reduce costs while ensuring the drain functions effectively. By removing the wetland and prioritizing essential improvements, staff and the Engineer have sought a balanced approach that considers both financial impacts on property owners and the need for a modernized, functional drainage system. With Council's approval, a new mailing will be completed to inform property owners of an updated Meeting to Consider date with the revised Engineer Report.

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### **Appendices:**

- a. Letter dated September 10, 2024 titled 'Oil Mill Creek Municipal Drain – Update'

Respectfully submitted,

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**Report Approval:**

All reports reviewed and approved by the Department Director and also the City Treasurer when relevant. Final review and approval by the Chief Administrative Officer.