

Strathcona Park Public Advisory Committee Meeting
November 20, 2009
BC Parks Boardroom, Rathtrevor Beach Park

Present – Ron Quilter, BC Parks, Sharon Erickson, BC Parks, Barb Baker, Tawney Lem, Nick Page, Phillip Stone, Peggy Carswell, Warrick Whitehead, Gary Schaan, Paul Erickson, David Campbell, David Vincent

Public – Peter Rothermel (FMCBC), Jen Berkely (student at Vancouver Island University)

Recorder – John Milne

1. **Opening Remarks** –Gary mentioned that Area Supervisor Andy Smith is recovering, working part time now, soon to be full time. Ron mentioned that Chris Kissinger has retired as Regional Manager, Dick Heath is still on medical leave, Bryan Williams is currently acting and the a new Regional Manager, Don Cadden will start in January.

Gary said he has been with the committee for 7 years, and will stay for one more meeting to provide a transition to a new chair person. Gary mentioned the resourcing problem BC Parks is experiencing. Gary feels positive about continuing support for the Park from staff, management and public groups.

Warrick suggested picking new chair person for SPPAC. Phillip expressed gratitude to Gary for his service.

2. **Confirm Previous Minutes** – Ron commented about having two sets of minutes, one brief, and one more detailed. The former shortened version was adopted as previously circulated.

3. Review Previous Minutes

Bedwell Horse Issue – Master Plan Amendment Process, Minister's Decision – Gary/Sharon.

Sharon gave an update. Staff have been working on the language of the Master Plan Amendment. The Minister has signed the decision to Amendthe Master Plan. The amendment will be signed by either senior executive or the Minister

Tawney asked about old road beds and associated corridors, and the % of the park impacted. Is there a map that shows where these areas are? Can SPPAC see such a map? Sharon replied staff provided such a map to the Minister that showed the linear length of the trail, and the impact was calculated by averaging the width and working out the area. Sharon said this map could be shared with SPPAC. Warrick asked if SPPAC will have any input into this process. Ron asked if SPPAC would like more input. Warrick said

yes. Gary asked what happens when road beds disappear as in the Bedwell where they have washed out? What is the interpretation of what is a corridor? Phillip mentioned the roadbed is now river bed in some cases. Maybe there will be no suitable place to rebuild trail, or maybe it can be rebuilt. The CWR park use permit will be adjudicated, and specific decisions made after the amendment is signed and the new direction confirmed. Nick asked about how long it would take to adjudicate the PUP after the language is finalized. Ron thinks it won't happen before more field visits are done next summer.

Gary asked if SPPAC is interested in providing feedback to the amendment language. A discussion about options ensued.

Sharon explained criteria would be applied within the corridor of the route to determine if horses would be allowed or not.

Peggy would like to make recommendation now, rather than after the language is finalized even though some information is not known.

Gary thinks this could wait until the next meeting.

Tawney noted criteria should only apply to the part where the road bed is already in existence. Sharon said that she would bring forward to Victoria any requests for input or advice from SPPAC. Nick asked about the time line for approval of the amendment. It would probably be before the next SPPAC meeting

Motion – SPPAC requests copies of addendum of possible sites being considered for horse use, a map of roads and associated road corridors immediately, and also receive draft language of the amendment when available.

Moved by Nick, seconded by Warrick, passed unanimously.

John Milne commented on the Backcountry Horsemen proposal to investigate building a horse trail to link up with the Della Falls trail. This group is exploring opportunities given by this amendment to expand their opportunities to ride in the Park.

Peter Rothermel mentioned FMCBC wrote the Minister to say he should follow the wishes of SPPAC.

Paradise Meadows Trailhead Relocation and Visitors Center update – Ron

Ron showed slides of the new visitors' center and trail. The total cost of trail and building was about \$800,000.

Ron gave credit to SWI and especially Steve Smith. He reviewed the history of the project. The new trail loop has been completed.

Peggy added more credit to Steve Smith for all his work

The official opening will probably be next spring. Credit was also given to Andy Smith for his part in making this project successful.

Master Plan Review – advice and discussion from SPPAC – lessons learned – Phillip/Tawney

Re a letter written on the idea of creating a variance board. Tawney suggested not creating another SPPAC. SPPAC wants to have decision making authority which has not happened. Legitimizing variances would change the Master Plan over time. At what point would a variance be considered? What would the threshold be?

This idea came out of an informal SPPAC meeting and was an attempt to avoid the kind of frustration resulting from the horse issue. Would this be a way of streamlining process?

The informal meeting was held at Gary's house, and was to look strategically at issues, resourcing, processes, NVI, etc. The variance idea came out of this discussion

One outcome was to let the Minister know of imperfections of the horse issue process.

Gary thought too much was spent on the CWR public processes that could have been better spent in the Park. The variance idea could be dealt with later after some more tweaking without opening Master Plan to more amendments.

Paul thinks more work should be done on the variance idea

David V. said SPPAC is limited by the Master Plan as to what it can deal with. SPPAC should step outside the Master Plan box at times to address other topics, without going through the politics, transparency and expense.

Maybe the Terms of Reference for SPPAC needs some work. Phillip wrote the variance letter, and now he thinks it isn't as clear as it was before. The informal discussion was really productive with the opportunity of free discussions. Now Phillip thinks the variance idea not so good.

Nick asked if other Master Plans and advisory groups would provide direction.

Action: Ron will ask his counterparts working with other advisory groups about their terms of reference.

Are SPPAC's Terms of Reference negotiable? Ron said SPPAC won't become a decision making body, but the Terms of Reference can be reviewed at any time. Warrick said SPPAC must defend the Master Plan and the Park, and protect its wilderness values. That is SPPAC's mandate. He feels SPPAC has not being listened to over last while.

Ron said SPPAC was set up as an advisory group, not an advocacy group. Phillip said SPPAC offers advice, other groups take it from there.

Nick asked about BC Parks and how they may do things different in future. BC Parks is always reacting to things, and haven't had time to reflect on this issue. Decisions are made and they go with it. Gary mentioned co-management ideas. This is done elsewhere, especially with First Nations. More could be done without taking away from management's authority. SPPAC will discuss this over the next year.

SPPAC can recommend how public consultation can be done in any particular situation. It could look at an issue and advise how consultation would look. This could be done as a matrix.

Ron recognizes the committee is not happy with how things went on the horse use issue and very, happy that the committee held an informal meeting with positive outcomes. Mostly everything has gone well. This may be the first time SPPAC's advice wasn't taken. Ron thinks SPPAC is an important committee.

Warrick read the goals from the variance letter, and suggested they be added to the committee's Terms of Reference. They cover the topics of cost effectiveness, transparency and upholding the Master Plan.

BC Parks 100 Update – Phillip

Phillip gave an update of the centennial expedition project. Information packages were sent to Gordon Campbell, Minister Penner and all island MLA's. The administration of finances will probably involve partnering with an organization, possibly the Campbell River Museum. Phillip will also approach the BC museum. A videographer is interested I being involved. The Buttle Lake canoe leg will involve Strathcona Park Lodge

Victoria announced the creation of a Park Enhancement Fund (PEF) which can receive donations. Money can be donated to BC Parks specifically for this project. Also Ron is working with the government's legal branch on liability issues, to ensure that government can be involved in this expedition without risk.

It was asked if this project is SPPAC's. The answer: Probably not.

Barb mentioned a historic group in Port Alberni which should be interested in being involved at that end.

Ron added information about Parks 100 project. The Premier's office has been in touch, and Ron has passed information on. Head office is supportive of the Centennial Expedition, as this ties in perfectly with Parks 100 celebrations.

BC Magazine has also been approached by BC Parks regarding the centennial celebration generally, and the expedition project in particular.

Other parks also will be involved in celebration, but no funding is available from government. Derek Thompson, retired Assistant Deputy Minister, is leading an external committee to promote the celebration. This group is trying to make more parks relevant to government and the public. Other strategies were also mentioned.

Ron showed a presentation of this committee's brochure about planned park celebrations province wide. He will send this to Phillip.

Paul suggested each park could build a centennial trail. Ron said could happen if a group were to fund and build it (assuming that any trail is supported by management plan direction). Nick mentioned the goal is to reengage people with parks, so trail building may be a spin off. There could be an upgraded trail renamed as a centennial trail.

David Vincent asked if parks have the resources to oversee volunteer trail builders. Ron said that this would be difficult and choices will need to be made as to which projects are supported. There are other options for managing projects in parks.

Warrick read part of a letter suggesting eco tourism could involve an element of trail building or upgrading. Ron mentioned previous Sierra Club service trips held on Forbidden Plateau, specifically revegetation around Kwai Lake. These Sierra Club service trips have been held in Mount Robson Park for the last few years, but may come back to Strathcona. This could also be sponsored by a group like SWI or Island Trails. They could apply for funding to pay for management of volunteer work.

4. New Business

Strathcona Park Resourcing – Dave/Gary

This topic also came from the informal meeting at Gary's house. David Vincent drafted a letter to the Minister regarding the lack of resources for BC Parks.

Action: SPPAC decided to send this letter to the Minister. Peggy and David V will work on editing it..

Ron mentioned reminded the committee that their terms of reference has them report to the Regional Manager and letters should be directed to him with advice rather than the Minister.

Comments from committee members should go to them using an older version of Word. Gary supported Peggy's suggestion of putting a positive spin on letter, and emphasizing using volunteers more effectively. Phillip suggested there is money available in government, but more priority needs to be given to parks. David V. asked people use

track changes, and save and send the file using the person's name so David knows whose it is.

Committee Business – Ron

There are now financial constraints limiting funds available for conducting SPPAC meetings. How can expenses be reigned in? Suggestions are welcome for the next meeting. Some people have been charging less than what they have deserved. Can some business be done by phone? Two meetings a year would be the absolute minimum. Conference calls are not very effective ways of having meetings.

David Vincent and Gary are at the end of their terms, so SPPAC may need to recruit new members soon. Ron appreciates Gary serving through a difficult time. Gary and David will attend one more SPPAC meeting.

Gary is willing to chair one more meeting if needed.

There was discussion about a new chair. The new chair will be finalized at the next meeting. The committee supports Tawney Lem, subject to her acceptance.

NVI Mine Questions – Nick

This also was discussed at the informal meeting. NVI needs to define what the footprint of their operation is with respect to power production. The annual mine meeting has been more of a presentation to SPPAC than anything else. What are the environmental costs and benefits to NVI's power proposal? How much does power influence the longevity of the mine? What are the potential changes to Jim Mitchell and Thelwood Lake dams? How is the mine's closure plan affected by power production plans? What is life expectancy of mine, and what is it based on? These are all questions SPPAC would like answered.

Action – Nick will forward questions to Ron or Andy

These questions will be forwarded to NVI for answers at next the next mine meeting. Paul asked about a tour of the mine, and will organize it. This may be an opportunity to combine a site visit with the annual meeting.

Warrick would like to tour NVI's power production facilities. Dave suggested looking from the air. Nick suggested visiting in the summer when water levels are low.

Mine meetings do not always include all of the SPPAC committee. People could car pool up in a Parks vehicle from Miracle Beach to save money.

Gary said NVI is still looking for advice from SPPAC on their proposals. Paul said their financial health may be better than before, so they may be able to afford to carry out some of the plans previously discussed.

Naming conventions, plaques, cairns – recognition board? – Warrick

This topic has been talked about for a long time. It was previously suggested a memorial wall be put up at either Elk Portal or Visitors Center at Paradise Meadows.

David V does not want to see any memorials in the Park at all. Existing plaques would have to stay, as some have official permission. When applications to name a feature are made, they are referred to the land owners. Parks make a recommendation as to whether or not they support the application. Sometimes the Minister has overruled Parks decision.

Are there other ways to honour individuals, other than plaques or walls, eg. planting a tree.?

SPPAC can recommend creating a policy suggesting alternatives for honouring people.

Phillip suggested not making this an issue, so people won't get ideas.

ATV/Snowmobile licensing – Warrick

A new law is coming making it mandatory to have number plates on off road machines so they could be identified and reported if necessary. The press release stated this will come in effect in about 2 years.

The Regional Management Compliance Planning (RMCP) initiative involves having various Ministry's enforcing each other's regulations to make better use of government compliance staff. They can share physical resources as well. The snowmobile problem experienced in Strathcona Park could be solved as part of this.

5. Park Update

Ron will send out an update at a later time due to running out of time at this meeting.

6. Public Question Period

There was no time for questions from the public.

7. Next Meeting - March 5, 2010