

**STRATHCONA PARK PUBLIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**MEETING – FINAL MINUTES**

**February 13, 2009 6:00 PM – 10 PM**

**BC PARKS BOARDROOM, BLACK CREEK**

**SPPAC MEMBERS:** Gary Schaan (Chair), Barb Baker, Paul Erickson, Tawney Lem, Philip Stone, David Campbell, David Vincent, Nick Page, Warrick Whitehead.

**BC Parks:** Andy Smith; Ron Quilter

**Recorder:** John Milne

Members of the public – John Wilson, Jan Whitehead, Marlene Smith, Steve Smith, Karl Stevenson, Leroy McFarlane, Lorne Lanyon, Betty Brooks, Linsey Elms, Jennifer Pass, Jack Welsh, Chris Barner, and others.

**Absent:** Peggy Carswell

1. Opening Remarks Gary Schaan (chair)

Gary referred to a meeting held with NVI earlier in the day. The Level 2 Assessment and Master Plan Amendment documents are just out, and there has not been much time to review them.

2. Confirm Previous Minutes (October 3, 2008) All

The minutes are accepted as circulated.

**Action – These minutes will be posted on BC Parks website.**

3. Master Plan Review Update Ron

Ron thanked the committee for persevering with the issue as it has been controversial. It's been almost 3 years since the application was received. No decision on CWR's application has been made yet. Parks received the BUFO Master Plan Review document. The Minister was briefed about 2 weeks ago. The Minister may decide to amend or not amend the Master Plan. If there is no amendment, then Dick Heath would have to decide whether or not to allow the permit on the basis of the existing Master Plan.

It has taken a long time to make these documents public, and Ron realizes there has not been much time to review them. The decision to release them was made Wednesday prior to this meeting.

Ron acknowledged receipt of FOI distributed by the FOS but BC Parks did not have the opportunity to review the document to comment on it. The BUFO report is one source of input for decision making. All recent emails have been sent on up the line. The Minister has been well informed.

Tawney asked what criteria are used for making this kind of decision so that transparency exists. Hopefully, there is some rationale given when a decision is made. It may be the Deputy \Minister who makes the decision.

The L2 Impact Assessment would be used to adjudicate the permit, not to make the decision on the Master Plan Amendment. There are several ways an amendment could be made. Ron and Andy confirmed that the Master Plan amendment process and the CWR permit adjudication are two separate processes. The permit will only be looked at after a decision has been made about the Master Plan amendment. If the amendment does not support horses in the Bedwell, the permit would be turned down. The permit decision will be made by the Regional Manager.

Gary said that decision making is residing where it should be, at the higher level. Gary pointed out staff has forwarded SPPAC's position.

Warrick stated he's read most of the information made available. He thinks the whole process has been very flawed. He's upset that the Minister will be making a decision based on a flawed process. Warrick thinks no decision should be made, rather the whole flawed process be looked at. The Minister should know this.

Ron repeated all information has been passed on, and they know what has transpired. What would have been a more appropriate process?

Barb thinks it's too late to have more input.

Gary thinks it would be useful for SPPAC to review the process in a strategic sense. Having SPPAC involved in the Master Plan process is a precedent. (Note: SPPAC was involved in the previous major Master Plan Amendment) The regulatory framework needs to be looked at. How should an Amendment process be carried out? Gary agrees with Barb.

Tawney pointed out the FOI material pointed out two Ministry people gave the opinion that horse use was not permitted. Where do those two people fit in the process? Ron said there are different opinions, and they are not in decision making positions. Other senior staff had the opinion that there was ambiguity. There have been a lot of different opinions over the years. Andy added that excerpts referred to in the FOI are snapshots in time of an ongoing discussion process. Opinions and thoughts change over time based on new information and further discussion with others.

Nick referred to the FOI that suggested horse use had been considered and rejected especially in the previous amendment process. Nick thought parks got painted into a corner.

- Tawney pointed out point ten in the Friends of Strathcona FOI list where Terms of Reference were signed off then a draft copy taken to SPPAC for input. She took offence to this. David Vincent supported Tawney. It shouldn't have been signed off. Andy, Ron and he looked at this in an opposite viewpoint and in talking to Ken the ToR was still available for SPPAC to comment on.

Phillip supported Warrick's previous comments, and questioned the L2 Assessment and its suggestion about mitigating public opinion through education. It is inaccurate and misleading.

Tawney mentioned again the criteria about how decisions are made. Ron couldn't answer the question other than saying that the Minister was briefed and has all the information we have to make a decision. Ron suggested SPPAC may want to make a statement in the minutes.

Warrick said the L2 Assessment is all about mitigation of impacts rather than the points brought up by the public. Now the minister is making a decision about something that should not be done. SPPAC is a special committee within parks. There has been talk about a province wide SPPAC-like committee, and this doesn't look good. It needs sorting out.

Nick says we are dealing with bigger picture issues, and we need to deal with how the process has broken down. Gary senses a consensus that SPPAC should review the role of the committee and its relationship to the Master Plan. An in-house review should be done with some support of a consultant. Nick thinks SPPAC could start a discussion tonight. How does SPPAC go forward after this Bedwell issue is over? What should the process be for minor or major changes to the Master Plan? In community planning there are a whole range of possibilities.

Warrick questioned opening the Master Plan to all kinds of changes. Gary says we don't have mechanisms to allow changes based on clear input and consensus. It needs to be evaluated. Warrick thinks SPPAC should make it clear that they believe the process has been flawed, and the decision should be put on hold until this is sorted out. Gary thinks there has been a lot of information available. This issue has been a lesson. Warrick thinks this is about Parks, not SPPAC. Even with SPPAC present, things haven't gone as they should have.

Phillip says we can't assume what decision the Minister will make. SPPAC needs to focus on how to improve the situation in the future. The CWR issue is out of SPPAC's hands.

Nick referred to the TimberWest issue in 1998, and how parks learned from it. This should have the same result. A middle issue is how SPPAC's advice is used by Parks. The big issue may be Parks wide.

Gary asked for consensus based on Nick's statement.

Barb asked about the previous SPPAC position about not supporting the amendment process.

Warrick says the public is feeling shut out of the process. Gary says the public was not shut out, and we don't know what is in front of the Minister and what his briefing notes say. There may have been missteps and confusion, but there was public input.

Phillip says let's discuss the future and the role of SPPAC. Phillip notes that by doing a L2 Assessment there is a possibility of approving the permit. This was done by exception. Andy explained that the L2 was funded by the Ministry to ensure there was no obligation to the proponent for the government to approve the permit. If the permit is approved, CWR will need to pay for the Level 2. This was the Minister's decision due to the lengthy term this permit had been in circulation and to be fair to the proponent. The Minister's decision regarding the Master Plan amendment will dictate if there will be any further adjudication of the permit.

David Campbell pointed out this is not normal procedure.

David Vincent suggests a review of the lessons learned from the past process of the last three years and going through these and considering how a Master Plan should be structured to clearly guide content and processes to variances, and how any Master Plan deals with this, how it's structured, and to make it less onerous. It should answer what goes to the public, and what doesn't?

David said to separate this Master Plan from any Master Plan

Tawney wondered about how the Master Plan is written so it allows certain things, but doesn't say it doesn't allow certain other things. It is silent on things it doesn't allow. SPPAC will be faced with this situation again. Would Parks be willing to look at the framework of the master plan with the idea of giving the plan clarity and making it stronger?

Warrick says values for parks change over time, and this has to be taken into account. There are philosophical issues to consider.

**Action: SPPAC agreed to support Dave Vincent's suggestions. They are to be dealt with at a future meeting so should be put on the agenda.**

SPPAC should have an extended meeting, a session followed by the public meeting, or strike a subcommittee to come up with some suggestions, maybe Nick, Warrick, David

Vincent, Phillip Stone and Tawnee. It was also suggested that the BC Parks Planning Manager be involved with the subcommittee.

**Action: SPPAC will form a subcommittee comprised of Nick Page, Warrick Whitehead, David Vincent, Phillip Stone and Tawney Lem to deal with these suggestions.**

4. Bedwell Environmental Impact Assessment Update

Ron

Ron reviewed the process followed.

Nick commented on the L2 report. He said it is thorough, but some issues are brushed over. There is not a lot of on the ground assessment. Nick agrees with some points, and not others. The L2 missed the point of disease transfer from horses to elk. Nick couldn't find anything on this when he looked. This subject needs checking out.

Tawney commented on its archeological findings. She said that post disturbance means there could be a greater chance of finding artifacts. She also said the report's database not that complete.

David Campbell said there is not a clear link between the recommendations and the data. The report didn't mention how problems of erosion will be dealt with if new sections of trail are built and how this will be mitigated.

Warrick said the hard road bed is missing so it couldn't be made into a trail, and there is no information on riding horses in wet areas. These facts can't all be mitigated.

Phillip said the comment in the report on social impacts and how they would be mitigated through education is inadequate.

John Milne looked at the report and totaled the distance the trail has been washed out to be 648 m. He checked the 1998 trail study done for Parks by Tom Ward and at that time the total trail washed out totaled 1213 m. He questioned how that could be. Comments were made that this discrepancy needs to be looked at.

Barb commented on corral building. Why have several sites been identified for corrals? She questioned the references to fire building. Ron said there are no fires allowed in Strathcona Park.

Tawney and Nick both said horse riding is not a common use in a temperate rain forest, so little information is available.

Barb asked if any studies have been done on horse use in other parks. Andy said the consultants approached others and asked, but nothing is available. Paul commented on the substantial impact of horses in some parks.

**Action: Gary suggested thanking the consultants and pass on SPPAC's comments and that they be noted.**

Public Comment Period – (moved up due to structure of agenda)

Marlene Smith had a comment re the missing parts of the trail. In last year's hike (September 2007), there was maybe another 1 km eroded away meaning a total of 2.2 km of the trail missing. This flaw casts doubt on the credibility of the rest of the report.

Karl Stevenson – read a statement. Karl said to leave intrusive activities out of the Park. He wants the Park to have minimal impacts, and he also thanked SPPAC for its good job. He would like to talk to decision makers, and does not want to have another blockade.

Jennifer Pass – The intent of Master Plan is not to allow horses in the Park. She is concerned about changing “no” to “criteria”, then criteria can be mitigated. This is dangerous.

Leroy McFarlane is disturbed at SPPAC's advice being disregarded, and wonders if SPPAC is still willing to move forward and make a strong statement coming from this meeting. Some questions needs answering. Who is the Genovese Family Trust? It is hard to find out by doing research. Why is there only one bidder? Why not open the proposal to the highest bidder? He can imagine what the Minister has in front of him. He commented on Parks' lack of money and the government's philosophy of encouraging P3s.

Chris Barner said the focus has to be on how can something so negatively received by the public be in front of the Minister? Our voice is not being heard through SPPAC, and SPPAC needs to make itself heard.

Warrick pointed out SPPAC is an advisory committee.

Phillip responded SPPAC could write a letter to make a statement and take a stand. Tawney noted FOSP and CWR have met with the Minister, why not SPPAC?

Paul asked about meeting with the Minister.

Phillip commented about government policy of mitigating impacts with everything.

Phillip moved SPPAC write letter to the Minister stating their opposition to horses in the Park

Gary cautioned the meeting about other communities whose interests are involved, e.g. the Ahousaht, and lack of funding for parks.

Phillip noted the consensus of opinion around the table. Nick says we have to reflect the committee and the public, not only one group.

It was noted that there is no First Nations' representation on SPPAC. Andy confirmed that FN have been invited to participate on SPPAC. Taney advised FN may not want to participate as they feel they are a nation.

Warrick supported Phillip and suggests meeting with the Minister. Phillip would like a letter to be written, and to follow up on David Vincent's ideas.

Paul says keep the message simple and straightforward. Keep it a single issue.

Phillip moved that SPPAC write the Minister to reaffirm our opposition to horse use in the Bedwell Valley, and to reaffirm we do not recognize the proposed Master Plan Amendment.

David Vincent says SPPAC is concerned about information presented and the process used was flawed.

Paul reminded everyone of what SPPAC passed last year.

**Action – Phillip will draft the letter and circulate it to SPPAC members within 10 days.**

## 5. Centennial Update

Andy

Andy explained that Ron is the regional representative on the Centennial Committee and then stated that he believes there has been no budget allocation for this to date. A list of ideas is ongoing and SPPAC was invited to submit ideas through Andy at the last meeting.

John Milne mentioned the trail building proposal between FMCBC and FOSP previously made could possibly be reactivated.

Christine Houghton is the person in Parks responsible.

**Action: Andy will email this contact to Gary so he can follow up.**

Phillip mentioned the re-creation of the Price Ellison expedition is still being talked about. The proposal includes inviting the Minister. The original historic party was 23 people. For the re-creation there is an opportunity for changing people along the way to include even more.

**Motion: That SPPAC undertake and execute an expedition starting at Crown Mountain, going down Buttle Lake, up the Price Creek Valley and ending at Port Alberni to reenact the original expedition and to invite the Minister and other dignitaries.**

**Phillip will circulate the preliminary plan to SPPAC members. It would take place in July 2010, and be 3 weeks duration.**

**Carried**

6. Wood Mountain Park/Strathcona Access Update

Andy

Previous concerns about mud bogging in the area are being dealt with as best as possible. The Komox First Nation is interested in the area. It is part of the initial offer for treaty settlement, but no details are available yet. It's up to the Band whether or not to release information. Andy is not sure if it will be accepted, or not.

Gary moved that SPPAC through Andy to ask the treaty team to guarantee public access to Strathcona Park. Andy has already done this through Chris Kissinger who is the regional representative for such issues. Gary says Andy can have access to the offer to see what is offered, and should know what provisions are in the offer. Andy has pursued this, and it has been advised by Chris that the Strathcona Access issue is known about but confirmed that there is no wording yet in the initial agreement, but it will be worked out later. Andy explained that Gary was given the name and contact information for the government's negotiating team rep, but Gary believes they won't tell him anything.

There has been a new cabin built on Wood Mountain probably within the Park. Linsay Elms reported on its location and sketched a map.

7. Marmot Release (Don Doyle handout re: Marmot Strategy)

Andy

The handout was circulated. Don Doyle asked if they should have a platform and toilet at their Grieg Ridge camp? Andy explained that when they had a base camp there was more concern for impacts due to walking back and forth along the same paths, but with small short term visits there shouldn't be a problem. Andy says they team is conscientious about their impact, and thinks these are not needed.

Warrick brought up some questions he had asked before. He has not had an answer from Don Doyle. His questions have been asked several times. The Marmot program is expanding. SPPAC needs answers to these questions, and needs to put limits on what they should do. Warrick feels he is the only one taking this position. Andy disagrees and says he has given the information and reported back to SPPAC. Nick wonders if Warrick's concerns are shared by the rest of the committee. Tawney checked her minutes and said Warrick's questions were answered at the last meeting.

Paul thinks SPPAC has no real say over this, that these presentations are a courtesy.

Andy said if Warrick is not satisfied, send him a note, and he will send it to Don Doyle. Warrick is not satisfied.

David Vincent moved a motion to say SPPAC is satisfied with the level of information received from the Marmot team.

Phillip has some concerns about the level of helicopter use in the Park and this should be relayed. Andy indicated that the recovery team must provide an annual work plan like they did for 2008 which is reviewed by himself and shared with SPPAC. In 2008 the helicopter concern was noted and the project team minimized trips as requested. A plan is required for 2009.

Andy pointed out that the marmot project is identified in the Master Plan. Nick read out the relevant section of Master Plan.

#### 8. SWI Hut at Paradise Meadow Update

Andy

The new building is up and looks good. Andy gave credit to Steve Smith for making this happen. The downside is they have not got the trust grant of \$75,000 based on estimates, and the total cost came to more to get the building to lockup. It had to be closed in before winter. The cost came to \$135,000 and CST can't pay out until project finished, so there is still no money, and the contractor wants to be paid. Andy investigated the potential of a loan from the government, but the financial policies are not set up for loans. However the project has been placed on the transfer agreement list (funds given, not loaned, for projects) but funds are dependent on surpluses at end of fiscal (end of March). Surpluses are not expected this year. While \$35,000 will get SWI out of debt to the contractor, another \$75,000 is required to totally finish off the building (including basement) and enhancements to the grounds.

Banks won't lend money on the building as it is owned by parks.

SWI are applying for a second grant through CST to finish the building.

#### 9. Round Table – other topics

Nick asked about Mount Washington and its effect on water quality in Paradise Meadows. Andy said Don Sharpe is developing a plan to work on the resort's impact on water quality. This is being done through the Ecosystem Management Branch as it is outside the park. Nick wants to see the report once completed.

SPPAC should have a detailed discussion on NVI's permanent closure. Andy indicated that the closure plan (due in June 2009) will be the first one prepared by NVI as the other ones were adopted when NVI took over. The closure plan explains reclamation. There is also annual reclamation plans.

Nick pointed out again SPPAC is advisory, and NVI will be driven by economics.

Ivor had said at the earlier meeting that the Lynx Pit will be filled in 10 years. Andy said closure dates keep changing depending on changing circumstances.

Tawney asked about when permits are up. They applied in August to renew in 2012 as specified in their existing permit. Andy explained the renewal process detailed in the current permit and that renewal is up to the discretion of the Minister. Phillip sees an opportunity for SPPAC to assert itself.

David Vincent says there will not be a date on closure as technology keeps changing. As long as there is no power line hook up to the BC Hydro grid, the mine will close eventually. NVI needs to keep to the conditions identified already regarding its impact and footprint.

There was some talk of expanding the dam on Thelwood and Jim Mitchell Lakes. David indicated that even though the tree line is about 6 ft above the water level (NVI's estimate) this could move up if the water was raised to the vegetation line (there is probably a reason for the barren rock below the vegetation line). This needs to be taken into account when doing an impact assessment. David also explained that there is a trade off about moving away from diesel (good) but then making it possible for the mine to potential operate longer because it is more economical. This should be considered when assessing any NVI "green initiatives".

**Action: Put NVI permit renewal on agenda for next meeting.**

#### 10. Public Question Period

John Wilson said he has a copy of the previous closure plan which is still in effect until a new one is drafted. It was a very valuable thing to see. It contains talk of burying garbage, pipelines, structures, etc. that could be troublesome. SPPAC should review the documents to see what has changed since then. This previous plan is the one signed off on before, and will be followed until next one is done.

David Vincent asked what funds are available to do the closure? \$20 million doesn't seem very much. Andy said there is other money under mines permit. Andy will get the information for SPPAC.

**Action – Andy to get NVI closure information for next SPPAC meeting.**

John Wilson mentioned the berms that support the tailings will stand up to one major seismic event, but not a second one. After one event, they would have to be inspected and rebuilt. There is no money for this in the plan.

**Next Meeting: Rath Trevor Beach – June 12/09**