

STRATHCONA PARK PUBLIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MEETING AGENDA

JANUARY 18, 2008 6 PM – 10 PM

BC PARKS BOARDROOM, RATHTREVER BEACH PARK

Present: Ron Quilter (B.C. Parks), Andy Smith (B.C. Parks), Sharon Erickson (B.C. Parks), Gary Schaan (chair), Barb Baker, Paul Erickson, Peggy Carswell, Tawney Lem, Philip Stone, Dave Campbell, Dave Vincent, Nick Page, Don Doyle (Marmot Recovery Program),

John Milne (recorder), John Wilson (former SPPAC member)

Absent – Warrick Whitehead

1. Opening Remarks - Gary Schaan

2. Introduction of New Members –

Andy Smith spoke of the selection process. There were 18 applications, so the selection process was difficult. Andy, Ron and Gary used SPPAC's terms of reference as criteria to fill vacancies. They created a matrix to help with decision making. One of the defining criteria was geographic representation.

The new members are Peggy Carswell, Nick Page, David Campbell, and Tawney Lem. Everyone introduced themselves and spoke of their background and skills they have to offer the committee.

3. SPPAC Terms of Reference/ SPPAC Background

Ron

Handout of materials to new members -

Ron spoke about the origins of SPPAC. What has happened to Strathcona Park has set a precedent for the rest of the park system. The Park has been a resource bank used to benefit other parks in the system. Ron spoke of the protests of the late 1980's, and its effect on the park system. Around 1993 when the first Master Plan was created, the Park was high profile and government put a lot of resources into Strathcona Park. SPPAC was created to uphold the Master Plan. Its record over the years has been very successful at fulfilling its mandate, and holding government to account.

The Clayoquot Wilderness Resort (CWR) application has renewed interest in SPPAC.

Peggy was asked to speak on the origins of the Master Plan process. She reviewed the intent of SPPAC to provide public input to park staff in making decisions.

4. Confirm Previous Minutes

All

Discussion on CWR Recommendation –

Andy gave out a paper called SPPAC Minutes Procedures. This paper was a suggestion as to how minutes could be amended, and the steps taken in finalizing them.

Last meeting's minutes were accepted as accurate except for the section on the CWR proposal, which has been subject to some debate on the phrasing of the SPPAC recommendation.

Gary updated new members on the history of the CWR application.

John Wilson spoke regarding rephrasing the last meeting's recommendation. John has sent out a series of emails suggesting new wording. He would like a statement added to the last minutes to reflect his concerns, and to clarify the issue.

Ron suggested if all agree with John's statement, then the minutes could be changed. If not, then all positions can be forwarded to the Minister.

Gary thinks since other members of the public were at the last meeting, then there is a responsibility to them to leave them as is, and add other opinions separately. Other people took that statement down. However, Gary would be happy to add a clarification to the last minutes.

Paul said reviewing the minutes is to determine that what was said is what is recorded. It could be changed, if desired. We don't know what other people wrote down at the last meeting, and whether or not what they wrote was accurate.

If Gary won't agree to change the wording, then the other option is to append the new statement. Paul says this is unworkable, as you have two different statements. Nick said it reflects the process. Dave Vincent thinks we should put down what we really meant to say, minutes are often modified. Dave is happy to adjust the process to make this work.

Discussion took place on what was meant by the recommendation. People were tired near the end of the last meeting, and weren't thinking clearly about what it meant. What was meant was that the CWR application could not proceed because it was contrary to the Master Plan. The process of amending the minutes was also discussed, and how to resolve this.

The new comment reads,

“The Committee recommends that, based on the Master Plan and Master Plan Amendment a Park Use Permit cannot be issued for CWR's proposal. The proposal has limited support from some members, while others are adamantly opposed.”

This statement is meant to clarify the statement made in the last minutes. It will follow the statement in question made in the Sept. 14th minutes with a comment that this new

statement was made to clarify the original. It will appear immediately below the bold statement in the Sept 14th minutes.

Andy mentioned how government has to file all emails, so please keep email discussion between SPPAC members until the issue is resolved, then forward the results to Andy and Ron.

5. Additions/Deletions to Agenda

Gary mentioned Peter Rothermel has asked if the public could comment during the meeting on an issue, not wait for the end. Ron mentioned this could be the chair's prerogative to do so.

6. Review Previous Minutes –

- **Marmot Reintroduction Update**

Don Doyle

Don gave a powerpoint presentation on last summer's work on reintroducing marmots to Greig Ridge. Don is willing to give more information to anyone wanting it. Contact him, if interested. Government has still not released the Marmot Recovery strategy report. Marmots were reintroduced into southern Vancouver Island as well as Strathcona Park. 37 marmots were released this year thanks to the captive breeding program.

Sites chosen for marmot introduction are where they historically existed ranging from Mount Cain in the north to Nanaimo Lakes in the south and including parts of Strathcona Park. Camps for marmot researchers used tent platforms to camp in order to reduce impacts. They also used a portable toilet. The plan for flying in and hiking out did not work as the leader had a knee injury so couldn't guide the rest. As a result there was a total of 19 helicopter trips, more than what was planned. There was a large deer population found on the ridge, and they were very tame indicating a lack of predators. 10-15 old marmot burrows were found on the ridge.

Two groups of marmots were flown into the park during the summer. There was a feeding program to help the first year's survival rate.

The camp was removed in late September. The vegetation under the tent platforms survived. All material was flown out.

Plans for 2008 are to introduce two more groups and to continue monitoring this year's groups. This year's two groups stayed apart until hibernation when 7 moved together and 1 remained alone. Altogether 9 marmots were reintroduced; 1 went missing almost immediately, and was probably taken by a golden eagle. Next year's camp may stay at the same site since impacts were low, and the site is convenient.

Another potential site for release is on Mount Adrian outside of the Park. Research is to be done to determine if flooding Buttle Lake affects the dispersion of marmots from one mountain to the other.

There were no members of the public seen near the camp this summer. There are currently no plans for camps in the Park past 2008. Further releases could occur in other parts of the Park without using any camps.

Gary asked that SPPAC be kept up to date on the project. Don will make a schedule of their plans available to SPPAC. There were lots of bears seen in the area and one martin stayed near the camp for about a week. Garbage was flown out so no problems were experienced with the bears.

- **Paradise Meadows Trailhead Relocation and Visitor Center**
Donor, Loop B **Andy/Paul**

Andy brought new SPPAC members up to date. He mentioned the new trail, and plans for the Visitors/Wilderness Center. Andy spoke of difficulties with raising funds to match a Coast Sustainability Trust (CST) grant of \$250,000. Plans are for the Vancouver Island Mountain Sports Society (VIMSS) and Strathcona Wilderness Institute (SWI) to hold the Park Use Permit (PUP), and do fundraising. In March Andy will find out about whether or not lottery money will be made available through the Campbell River Rotary Club.

The parks building has being dropped as part of the plan as the necessary money has not being raised. Questions about plans to put a park facility in a private building are being asked. Maybe a smaller park building would be more successful than building a more ambitious structure. If only one building is built, it would be located outside the park.

The issue is very complicated. Big donors are needed to make this successful. There is still a lot of interest in making this happen.

Peggy asked about making the building smaller so it could be more easily done. Andy would prefer something in the park, rather than using a building outside. Peggy mentioned the idea of using the Vanier High School construction class to build a small facility.

Paul mentioned people he has spoken to would prefer the Elk Portal as a site for a visitor's center, not Mount Washington. That is more of a main entrance to the park.

There is also talk about completing the second half of the trail loop in Paradise Meadows, i.e., option A from the original proposal. There is a need for this as visitors are completing the loop by using the chip trail along the paved road outside the park boundary. There is no money for this at present, but this could be done at some future time.

Nick suggested upgrading the chip trail which is on the highway alignment, rather than disturbing the meadows even more. Andy mentioned this would be difficult for disabled access.

Ron said Parks are getting more capital money, so building this additional trail could be a possibility. Paul asked about a priority list. Ron said this is not top, but fits into other government priorities of providing disabled access and increasing park use.

This is for information for the committee at this point. Members are invited to have a look this summer when they are up there.

- **Wood Mountain Update**

Andy

This is a separate class C park that sits near the border of Strathcona Park. It has become a problem with party goers and vandalism. There is no class C park board overseeing the park. Andy can enforce park regulations, but can't put signs up.

Parks are trying to block access to vehicles. Also there are attempts to "depark" it, and get rid of it. The issue of public access to Strathcona Park is important to the public as access to this part of Strathcona Park is through Wood Mountain Park. A problem still remains with cleaning it up the site where there has been a diesel spill. The cost of cleanup would be about \$200,000.

7. New Business

- **Master Plan Amendment Process "Clarifying Horse Use"**

Sharon/Ron

After the last meeting of Sept. 14th, staff presented the SPPAC recommendation to senior management regarding how the Master Plan didn't allow horse use in the Bedwell Valley, and about the history of the issue in the park.

The Master Plan section page vi states, "On a trial basis, two areas have been designated for horse riding and other areas will be reviewed", and says, in effect, that some topics may need reconsidering over time as new issues arise. *(Note to Andy and Ron – I missed the exact wording of the Master Plan. Can you add this for me?)*

There was mixed opinions about allowing horses in the Bedwell Valley from SPPAC members, and most of the public were against the CWR proposal for environmental reasons that would be answered by level 2 assessment.

Parks executive have instructed local staff to clarify the horse use issue by considering an amendment. The proposal could have gone to stage 2, but with enough controversy and vagueness, the issue should be clarified. This discussion will only consider the horse use, no other issues would be open for discussion.

Peggy mentioned the “thin edge of wedge comments” made, and “creating a precedent” comments coming from the public. Ron asked, “Can we deny a permit based on what may happen next, such as a request for a building?” Ron says there are ways around this determined by the wording of the PUP. Nick mentioned the corporatization of parks, and how this encourages further requests from others. Ron said zoning precludes this.

Ron said there are about 20 permits allowing guiding in park, and he mentioned the general zoning matrix stating horse use “may” be used in this zone.

Tawney asked which document has precedent, the master plan or the zoning matrix? Ron said it would be the plan, if it specifically stated that horses were not allowed. Dave pointed out Anne Fiddick’s and Peggy Carswell’s comments at the last meeting indicated horses were only allowed where mentioned.

Ron said Parks can’t reject a PUP application on what might happen in the future.

Nick said it would be a good idea in future to list what is permitted and what is not in each zone in the Master Plan. A line needs to be drawn. Tawney suggested creating a matrix for the master plan specific to Strathcona Park. Ron said this may be possible under the Master Plan review, but he is not sure where this process will take things. Also, Andy said who knows what the future will bring.

This question is about clarifying the horse use issue. We should look at all mentions of horse use in the plan and clarify them, not just look at the CWR application. This would be dealt with after the horse issue is clarified. In other words the outcome of this process determines whether or not the CWR proposal is approved or not..

Peggy spoke of how horses were allowed in some parts of the park because Anne Fiddick lived in Gold River, was the mayor of the town, and also represented the local horse riding community which supported horse use. At the same time there was a lot of public resistance to horse use evident at the hearings.

Some SPPAC members are suspicious about the intent of senior management doing an end run to help bring the CWR proposal about.

Phil is strongly opposed to horses in the park. Ron mentioned horses are allowed in many other B.C.parks.

Note that the Minister can override the Management Plan. It is not a legal document, but is followed closely by staff when making decisions.

Gary doesn’t think SPPAC should take a lead role in conducting this process. He doesn’t think there is a process available to deal with minor variances which he considers this issue to be. If this goes forward, parks should come up with a process to deal with minor variances such as this.

Dave thinks SPPAC should say horse use should not be allowed in any part of the park except for those now specifically mentioned in the Master Plan. However, there is no process for a variance, such as whether or not to allow horse use in the Bedwell. This is a variance, not an amendment to the Plan. This is about the Bedwell, deal with it.

Andy and Tawney said this doesn't deal with the problem. Ron said there are other areas in the Park where there are old roads that could be used by horses. There needs to be policy to allow, or not allow horses in other areas.

Peggy repeated that the public was against horse use in the rest of park in the original hearings. She thinks SPPAC should recommend that the Master Plan prevents horses in these areas, that this should go to the government, and they have to accept or reject the recommendation. Ron said parties interpret this differently.

Time to discuss this at this meeting is running out. Staff has been mandated to do conduct this process.

Paul is opposed to SPPAC being involved in this process, he believes horses should not be allowed in the park, specifically in the Bedwell Valley. He doesn't support any of the options given. Peggy agrees. Dave does too. Barb asked about why? Do we give reasons? Phil is opposed to horses in the Park. There is no need for a public process.

Phil had to leave at 10 p.m. to catch his ferry

Nick says we don't need this process. David agrees with no horses. Tawney thinks we need rationale. Gary doesn't like the process as it is park wide. The Bedwell Valley should be looked at specifically as a variance. There needs to be a specific process. Barb thinks the process is too complex, that there needs to be a way to stop horse use in the Bedwell. She wants to sit on fence to see what happens. The horse study mentioned in Master Plan needs to be done.

Ron said won't ask CWR to do level 2 assessment, if they don't have a hope of approval. Tawney said if they do deal with this, they should only look at Bedwell. Tawney said this assessment should only be considered if the committee believed that the Master Plan was interpreted to allow horse use in areas other than the few explicitly listed in the MP. Peggy and Nick disagree.

Tawney also made the comment that if the committee believed that the Master Plan was unclear (e.g. Was open to the possibility of horse use elsewhere), while focused study on the Bedwell maybe made sense because there was an application there, any study into expanded horse use should not just look at the Bedwell because this was a piece meal approach that did not consider cumulative effects.

Tawney asked about checking old minutes to support Peggy's comments. Peggy doesn't think she has copies of them, but perhaps the Ministry has some in their files..

Summary - The committee doesn't endorse this amendment process.

Is there a better way to spend this money to look at this issue?

Nick noted that separate issues are compartmentalized and mitigation suggested, but the cumulative impacts are very difficult to assess.

Dave said the issue should be site specific. CWR cannot rebuild the road as it once was. It is impossible There should be a level 2 assessment done by parks, not the proponent. Proponent would pay. Dave thinks money for the amendment process should go into evaluating horses in the Bedwell, not paid for by the proponent. This leaves out the philosophical issues, and only deals with the technical issues.

Gary concurs with what Dave said.

Peggy suggested adding supporting details to the minutes, eg. Dave's concern regarding the feasibility of repairing road bed to acceptable standards.

The times is up. (10:45 p.m.)

Next meeting – May 30

NVI mine meeting Jan 25th Miracle Beach office., 10:30 – 2:30.

Mine avalanche control is being studied by a consultant.

Items remaining of the agenda that were not discussed due to lack of time.

They should be carried forward to the agenda of the May 30th meeting.

- Discussion on “Consensus” within the SPPAC Terms of Reference Nick
- Park user fees Phil
- Snowmobile Use
- Mount Washington effects on Parks
- Advice to Park Management – Gary's vision for SPPAC Gary
 - 100th Anniversary and enhancing park interest
 - Park access points

Park budget issues
Science and research

- NVI Upcoming meeting

Andy

Park Update Andy

Public Question Period

Next Meeting: