

MINUTES
ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL AREAS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Held at Saanich Municipal Hall, Committee Room No. 2
May 27, 2014 at 5:15 p.m.

Present: Chair: Councillor D. Murdock

Members: Kevin Brown, Harry Drage, Jude Coates, Mary Haig-Brown, Hal Gibbard,
Al-Nashir Charania, Marie Vander Heiden

Staff: Adriane Pollard, Environmental Services Manager; Gary Darrah, Parks
Planning and Design Manager; Becky Goddall, Park Planner/ Designer;
Elizabeth van den Hengel, Committee Clerk

Regrets: Roberta Hesselgrave

MINUTES

MOVED by J. Coates and Seconded by M. Haig-Brown: "That the Minutes of the Environment and Natural Areas Advisory Committee meeting held April 22, 2014 be adopted."

CARRIED

CUTHBERT HOLMES PARK

The Park Planner/ Designer presented and the following was noted:

- Cuthbert Holmes Park is an urban refuge which promotes respectful and appropriate recreational use while protecting its natural features and ecosystems.
- In 1986 the park was turned over to Saanich and in 1987 a large portion of land was granted to the Provincial Capital Commission and subsequently leased for 99 years to Saanich.
- Cuthbert Holmes Park is a combination of the Cuthbert Holmes Park (Municipal Park classification) and Tillicum Park (Community Park classification). These two parks are collectively referred to as Cuthbert Holmes Park in the presentation.
- A number of factors have negatively affected the park over the years.
- Unrestricted access and unauthorized trails have resulted in soil compaction, loss of soil and plant understory and contributed to the spread of invasive plants.
- Areas of heavy invasive plant infestation and certain isolated pockets, harbour negative activities which discourage some potential visitors.
- There is a perception that parts of the parks are wasted, and that it is not fulfilling its recreational potential.
- Suggested management goals are:
 - Protect and restore natural areas.
 - Refine the trail system to meet the park's environmental, recreational and safety needs.
 - Provide the opportunity for a range of appropriate, enjoyable and enriching recreational activities.

- Increase the number of park users, remove invasive vegetation cover that harbours negative activities and bring problem isolated areas into the larger park experience.
- Cuthbert Holmes Park contains 1.5 kilometers of the Colquitz River and borders on its estuary. A combination of Douglas fir, mixed forests, wetlands, riparian areas and sensitive ecosystems all exist within the park.
- The park is home to the largest breeding colony of Great Blue Heron on Vancouver Island.
- The Colquitz River supports numerous fish species.
- The park is well used by the neighbourhood, nature enthusiasts, dog walkers, boaters, students from nearby schools and visitors from the adjacent mall.
- The park trails link the immediate neighbourhood to the greater Centennial Trails system.
- The fish counting ladder is a popular feature during the salmon spawning season.
- Many groups are active in the park;
 - Friends of Cuthbert Holmes Park
 - The Portage Inlet Sanctuary Colquitz Estuary Society
 - Citizen Canine
 - Victoria Fish and Game Protective Association
- The public consultation process revealed two basic attitudes toward the park. A minority group feels that the park is degraded beyond recovery. The strong majority feel that the park has a natural environment that must be restored and protected.
- The stakeholder preference summary listed the following:
 - Preserve and restore the park's natural environment
 - Continue to accommodate public access and increase the number of park users
 - Showcase the park's natural environment and enhance the recreational opportunities it offers
 - Support only those activities that will not threaten the park's environmental health
 - Address safety and security concern
- There currently is little support for active recreation within the park.
- Strong requests to keep the park open for dog walkers.
- Approximately 65% of the park is classified as having high environmental sensitivity, 25% of the park is classified as having medium sensitivity, 6% is classified as low sensitivity and 4% is classified as very low environmental sensitivity.

Committee discussion occurred and the following was noted:

- The Cuthbert Holmes Park Plan will be circulated to community associations, posted on the Saanich website.
- The public should be consulted again prior to moving the plan forward.
- Dog's off-leash are never 100% under control. Thought should be given to leash and/or dog requirements.

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARDS 2014

The Manager of Environmental Services provided an update of the Environmental Awards and the following was noted:

- The award ceremony timeline was reviewed.
- Committee member M. Vander Heiden volunteered to be the Committee Member Presenter at the awards ceremony.
- The award winners were reviewed.

ENVIRONMENT WEEK

The Manager of Environmental Services provided an update on Environment Week June 1-7, 2014 and the following was noted:

- The Environmental Awards 2014 are at the end of Environment Week.
- A biodiversity display is on the second floor foyer of the Saanich Municipal hall with informative brochures.
- A pesticide alternative booth will be set-up at Saanich Commonwealth Pool with committee members attending.

STRATEGIC PLAN INDICATORS PART 3

The Chair led a discussion around the selection of Strategic Plan Indicators. Committee discussion occurred and the following was noted:

- Stream Health is an indicator that should be considered.
- Stream Health could be measured by reviewing the Environment Development Permits in 5 years. The Environmentally Sensitive Areas Atlas is updated and will be updated again in 5 years.
- In 2010 the CRD produced a report on stream function indicators from set assessments. Data sets could be obtained from Aquatext.
- Urban forestry- loss/gain of biodiversity would be a valuable indicator.
- Impervious cover- this data is available with the canopy cover data.
- Marine and Shoreline Health Indicators metrics could be generated from data sourced from streamside development area permits and reviewing yearly records of square meters of shoreline restored.

The Manager of Environmental Services spoke to the possibility of adding steam/stream health and shoreline protection as indicators.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

NEXT MEETING

Next meeting is Tuesday, June 24, 2014.

Saanich Councillor Murdock, Chair

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

Committee Secretary