

MINUTES
PARKS, TRAILS AND RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Held at Saanich Municipal Hall, Council Chambers
January 27, 2021 at 4:00 pm

Present: Councillor Judy Brownoff (Chair), Kathleen Burton, Leigh Campbell, Pamela Carroll, Pat Danforth (via telephone), Annie Djiotsa, Lyndsay Edgar (via telephone), Amy-Jade Louie (5:22 pm, via telephone), Dexter Owen

Staff: Suzanne Samborski, Director Parks, Recreation and Community Services; Eva Riccius, Senior Manager Parks; Cris Caravaca, Senior Manager Community Services; Tiana Solares, Senior Manager, Recreation Services; Gary Darrah, Manager, Park Planning and Development; Brenda Weatherston, Community Arts Specialist (4:19 pm); Tania Douglas, Senior Committee Clerk

Regrets: Ted Austin

Minutes

MOVED by D. Owen and Seconded by P. Carroll: "That the Minutes of the Parks, Trails and Recreation Advisory Committee meeting held October 1, 2020, be adopted as circulated."

CARRIED

WELCOME / INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair introduced herself and committee members provided information about their backgrounds and why they joined the advisory committee. Staff liaisons also provided information about their roles and the departments they work in.

CHAIR'S REMARKS

The Chair noted she is President and Chair of BC Healthy Communities, and Co-Chair for Pan Canadian Age-Friendly Communities initiative, and believes in inter-generational programming and supporting ways to keep all ages involved in the community. The United Nations has declared this is the decade of ecosystem-restoration, and also the decade of healthy aging. Hopefully some work can roll out through this committee in support of these declarations.

If members have any items for the agenda please contact the Senior Committee Clerk.

2021 MEETING DATES / TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Committee Terms of Reference and a memo dated January 27, 2021 from the Senior Committee Clerk regarding the 2021 Advisory Committee meeting dates were received for information. One member expressed concern about the start time of 4:00 p.m., however consensus was that the meeting dates and times were acceptable. It was noted that housekeeping edits are required for the Committee's Terms of Reference.

MOVED by K. Burton and Seconded by P. Carroll, "That the Parks, Trails and Recreation Advisory Committee recommends that the Committee Terms of Reference be amended by removing the asterisk and associated wording referencing the Natural parks P-4N zone on page one, and by amending the departmental name in the staff support section on page two of the document to read 'Parks, Recreation and Community Services'."

CARRIED

PARKS, RECREATION AND COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENTAL OVERVIEW

The Director of Parks, Recreation and Community Services introduced the department and expressed appreciation for the input and the different lenses that committee members offer. This team works for the community, which is rewarding, and can also be challenging at times in terms of all appreciating the direction of the service delivery Saanich offers.

A team flowchart and information was given regarding the many programs, supports in place for vulnerable populations, and the extensive partnerships Saanich has with other organizations and agencies. The department's mission: "Creating inspiring community spaces and places to connect, learn and belong". Staff want to build a healthy Saanich for individuals, family and community by encouraging an integrated approach to healthy living.

The Senior Manager, Recreation Services, spoke about the recreation centres and noted the positive community engagement and the sense of ownership that user groups, residents and staff have with the centres.

- As the centres age some maintenance is planned, for example Pearkes arena slab replacement will soon be going to tender and it is anticipated construction will start in March with the hopes to re-open in September.
- Gordon Head Centre turns 50 and staff are looking to find ways to celebrate this.
- Cedar Hill Centre is a community hub and has the loop trail in support of the older adult strategy. Some ceramics drop-in programs are still running at the moment and there is big demand for squash and tennis courts.
- The golf course flood repair work is coming to a close in the spring. About 48,000 rounds of golf were played in the past year.
- Saanich Commonwealth Place (SCP) are holding adaptive lessons; weight rooms and fitness classes are still popular. The boiler room will use wood chips to fuel the centre which should help reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

In reply to questions, staff noted:

- A feasibility study for a new rink will be done.
- The Cedar Hill Golf Course is the only 18-hole municipally-owned golf course.
- No formal process is needed to change names of 'recreation' to 'community' centres.
- An accessibility assessment was completed, and actions have been taking place and continue to take place to improve accessibility.
- Each centre has a manager; programmers, supervisors, specific staff for maintenance etc. (flow chart provided). SCP alone has 100+ FTEs with just one manager. Staff would like to look at having more assistant managers in the future.
- Programs are selected based upon surveys and feedback from the public. Staff also have discussions regarding trends. Market analysis is done and lots of feedback is received. Staff members do a lot of data analysis.

The Senior Manager, Parks, spoke to the large park system of over 170 parks and showed a map of the well-spaced system throughout the district. She noted:

- There are some nice trail connections between some parks.
- Council supported the Cedar Hill Park plan, and Horner Park is mostly completed with some small finishing touches to do. Positive feedback has been received for the Horner Park upgrade.
- There is ecosystem restoration to do in Cuthbert Holmes along with moving the asphalt trail away from the river.
- Help from the Pulling Together and Park Ambassador volunteers is invaluable and appreciated.
- There is planning work to do in the core area of Lambrick Park as well as work on the Tree Protection Bylaw and Bylaws relating to development.

The Senior Manager, Community Services, presented information on their team and noted they aim to create inspiring places and spaces and remove any social, financial and mobility barriers. This group has a team of programmers that focus on child, youth and older adult services, inclusion and accessibility, diversity and equity initiatives. Information was given on how Saanich aims to help lower income residents to access programs and services with the LIFE program. Financial assistance is also available for community youth. Civic pride and community identity is embraced with events such as the sandcastles at Cadboro Bay, and staff support all ways of making events culturally respectful.

Further replies to committee questions is noted:

- Staffing numbers and budget information was shared. Last year was very different financially, and appreciation was expressed that Council retained all staff.
- Saanich was one of the first organizations to have a pool re-open in the province and have a full slate of programs available.
- Council's support ensured that day camps could run when schools were closed. This was very good for the community.
- With the pandemic, public participation is different. Departments have been working together to brainstorm on how to best engage the public. Saanich has always had an online component for communicating. When there are less restrictions, there may be opportunity to hold open houses that limits the amount of people who can be present at one time.
- The Youth Development Strategy is almost done and staff will bring a report to Council soon.
- Staff are always open to hearing ideas from committee members.

PROVIDING SAFE SPACES, PLACES AND ACTIVITIES DURING COVID-19

Recreation Services and Community Services staff relayed information on 2020 activities:

- Between March – May all services were paused out of an abundance of caution, and resumption planning occurred. Safety and security for staff/residents were examined and adaptive programming was created.
- Saanich Recreation was one of first to reopen across the province. Pools were opened in a very limited capacity in June.
- Staff used a layered approach, bringing back one element at a time to see how it worked until adding another piece. There are many issues to consider to ensure safety for all.
- A master binder was created with resumption plans and guidelines for reopening. All plans had to go to the Emergency Operations Centre for approval. The process was complex.
- Floor plans were developed for participant entry/exit. Some things had to completely change (eg. people cannot use the change rooms). Staff continued this rigor following Worksafe BC guidelines.
- There are revenue positive and revenue neutral programs and staff have actively managed the programs/budgets.
- Lifeguard training had to be thought through.
- There are now reserved drop-ins and lots of time to clean in between programs.
- During the 2nd wave some programs were ordered to stop (eg. some fitness programming and adult general interest programs).
- Staff created new opportunities for service delivery, for example to support socially isolated seniors, a band was hired to play on the lawn of a care facility. This type of support will continue. Staff will continue to think of dynamic and productive ways to support vulnerable populations.

- There is support for staff, and there is the option to work from home for non-operational staff. Professional counselling availability has increased for staff and there is constant communication from management to gauge where staff are at. Having job security has greatly helped staff and appreciation for this was expressed.

COMMUNITY ARTS IN PARKS DURING COVID-19

The Community Arts Specialist provided an overview of actions taken to offer community arts during COVID. The following was noted:

- The support received from Council has made staff feel very valued.
- Summer 2020 saw lots of canceled larger events as Saanich had to abide by the restrictions. Fortunately it was safer outdoors and events with a maximum capacity of 50 could still occur.
- Staff worked on how to support community well-being by bringing arts and culture to the community safely and for free.
- The goal was to provide an opportunity to connect artists with the community safely outdoors with smaller scale events.
- To adapt, careful planning went in to service delivery and staff worked with Parks department colleagues on scheduling, limiting crowds, etc.
- Having pop-up opportunities versus advertised events worked well as we had to be flexible and adaptable to the changing situations.
- Staff have also had to measure success differently as the situation is much different.
- In terms of music in the community, 32 performances were offered from July-September in various parks and places. Staff tried to broaden diversity of ages, cultures, levels of experience, musical genres and instruments.
- Visual arts pop-ups occurred. Theatre pop-ups were planned but put on hold with the current restrictions.
- The HeArts together community art project has resulted in the creation of over 700+ hearts so far. This project reached out to isolated and vulnerable community members with the help of many community partners, and the hearts that were created connect with the community through park and online displays.
- Moon Festival Lantern Celebration was a controlled entry/exit drive/walk/bike-through. The cultural performances and community procession had to be removed. Despite the restrictions about 800 people attended the celebration.
- Looking ahead, staff will build on the successes of community arts in parks and will explore new ideas, collaborations and opportunities. Committee members are encouraged to share ideas and experiences with staff.

In reply to questions, the Community Arts Specialist noted:

- Many of the events were posted on the Saanich website after the fact in order to not draw large crowds to the events.
- Staff always tries to share the events online afterwards with videos and/or photos for those who cannot leave their homes.
- Discussions have occurred with some partners about selling some of the HeArts Together artwork as a fundraiser.

A suggestion was made to inform block watch programs of upcoming pop-up events.

GEORGE TRIPP YOUTH PARK / BIKE PARK DESIGN UPDATE

The Manager of Park Planning and Development provided an update regarding the George Tripp Youth Park:

- These are the early days of the project although staff have been working for about two years to obtain the site.

- The acre-sized property is leased from BC Hydro and is located between Lochside Drive and Borden Street beside the George Tripp Hydro Substation.
- Staff are working on a design/build contract and will be discussing all aspects to get project up and running.
- Public engagement may be able to occur via outside events onsite with the warm weather coming.
- Staff will keep committee informed of the progress but the hope is to open the park this summer (July or August opening).
- Youth parks mean different things to different people. This project came out of Youth Strategy. Staff are also looking at smaller facilities that may appeal to youth.

In reply to comments from committee members, staff noted:

- Bike parks typically offer distance and flow so riding should not be a concern with COVID. In terms of gathering places on the site, staff will have to look safety and distancing.
- The bike facility at McMinn Park should hopefully be up and running by June. McMinn track will be for younger users, and George Tripp for older users.
- Hopefully people who go into Haro woods will use the George Tripp track. A third facility is being looked at in West Saanich.
- Saanich Parks does have staff working to remove structures in Haro woods.
- UVic has only 1 parcel of land at Haro Woods and cannot accommodate a bike park.

A suggestion was made to advertise the location of the George Tripp bike park. Staff will post a map on website.

DIVISION UPDATES

There was no discussion. Updates were attached to the agenda for information.

ADJOURNMENT

The Chair noted that this meeting included a large amount of staff input and she hopes members enjoyed this time. Future meetings will have more member engagement. It was suggested that in the spring/summer this committee maybe can look at restoration projects.

The meeting adjourned at 6:05 pm. The next meeting is scheduled for February 24, 2021.

Councillor Brownoff, Chair

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

Committee Secretary