

MINUTES
PARKS, TRAILS AND RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Via Microsoft Teams
April 27, 2022 at 4:02 p.m.

Present: Councillor Judy Brownoff (Chair); Ted Austin; Pam Carroll; Rachel Corder; David Little; Amy-Jade Louie; Darrell Wick; Dex Owen

Staff: Eva Riccius, Senior Manager of Parks; Tiana Solares, Senior Manager of Recreation (4:45 p.m.); Troy McKay, Senior Manager of Transportation & Development Services; Paul de Greeff, Parks Manager of Planning & Development; Katie Turner, Park Stewardship Coordinator; Julie Lommerse, Park Planner; Nancy Chaggar, Senior Committee Clerk

Regrets: Leigh Campbell; Annie Djiotsa

1. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

MOVED by R. Corder and Seconded by P. Carroll: “That the minutes of the March 23, 2022 Parks, Trails and Recreation Advisory Committee meeting be adopted as circulated.”

CARRIED

2. RECEIPT OF CORRESPONDENCE

The correspondence was received for information.

2. CHAIR’S REMARKS

- Saanich is being recognized as a Bird Friendly City; an official announcement and new programming are expected.
- The budget process is nearing completion and final reading is expected at the May 9th Council meeting.

3. ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN – 2021 REPORT CARD

The Senior Manager of Transportation & Development Services provided an update on the 2021 progress of the Active Transportation Plan (ATP) and the following was noted:

- The ATP was adopted in June 2018 after a two year process to develop the plan, including extensive engagement. It was determined that 100 different transportation action items would be required.
- Engineering staff are currently working on a five year refresh to the ATP to determine the next set of priorities for implementation.
- There is a focus on capturing accurate data for reporting purposes. With 600 kilometers of roadway and various modes of transportation, there is a lot of data to work with.
- The ATP has three sets of priorities including sidewalks, on-road cycling, and trails. Parks staff look after implementation and maintenance of trails.
- It is evident that the community’s modes of transportation have shifted since COVID.
- Leading Pedestrian Intervals have been implemented at 20 traffic signals in the District.
- 50% of transit bus stops have been upgraded to meet accessibility guidelines.

- 100% of signals now have countdown timers and audible signals for people who are visually and audibly impaired.
- The report card data indicates that Saanich is on track for measures of success with people who are walking, cycling and taking transit.
- The District is behind on reported collisions with pedestrians and cyclists. As a result, Council has directed staff to work on a road safety plan to make streets safer and reduce collisions.
- Sidewalk implementation is delayed by a couple of years due to a lack of staffing resources; however, it is expected that a large portion of this work will be completed in 2022.
- The areas in which the report card measures success are: connections, convenience and culture.
- Events to celebrate successes occur when new infrastructure is implemented and completed, most recently was the Earth Day Festival.

In response to questions from the committee, the following was noted:

- AAA (All Ages and Abilities) are facilities suitable for everyone including children and elderly (8 to 80 years).
- The Safe Routes to School program is a continuous program which identifies barriers to active travel while working with schools to implement solutions. The CRD has taken on most of the planning for the program and will cycle through all 30 schools once every 10 years.
- Staff are working on a Report to Council (mainly financially driven) for options to accelerate the ATP.
- In last year's budget process, Council provided an additional \$2M in funding each year towards the implementation of the ATP. This is expected to achieve a moderate acceleration towards the requested acceleration of 50% (from 30 years to 15 years).

Parks staff are to bring an update to the Committee on trail improvements and maintenance proposed for this year as part of the ATP.

4. PARKS VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

The Park Stewardship Coordinator provided a presentation on the *Pulling Together* and *Park Ambassador* programs and the following was noted:

- The Parks volunteer programs stem from a policy in the Official Community Plan.
- Community environmental stewardship aims to foster and support public awareness, engagement, and participation in community environmental stewardship initiatives.
- Volunteer program involvement includes: *Pulling Together*, *Park Ambassador*, youth groups; corporate/faith/recreation groups; conservation groups; University of Victoria; Saanich Parks (staff).
- *Pulling Together* focuses on invasive species and habitat restoration and its goals are to enhance biodiversity, community engagement and education, restore ecosystem services, and social well-being.
- The *Park Ambassador* program is currently only operating at Mt. Douglas Park. Its goals are to enhance visitor experiences, provide volunteer opportunities, build capacity for visitor education, improve park management, and engage First Nations relationships and participation.
- In terms of the value that volunteers bring, Saanich receives roughly eight hours of volunteer time for every one hour of staff support. This translates to over \$550,000 in wages.
- The program's growth has been steady with the exception of a small downfall in 2020 as a result of COVID.
- *Pulling Together* works within best management practices to achieve maximum

results.

- Outreach tables are set up at community events to promote park stewardship.
- There is increased interest and demand for volunteering. Staff are working on succession planning and increasing efficiencies for the program.
- *Pulling Together* is at capacity and a wait list is being generated.

In response to questions from the Committee, the following was noted:

- There are *Pulling Together* groups who work every day of the week including weekends. Events will be posted on the website in the coming weeks.
- *Pulling Together* works with schools to involve youth and provides volunteer hours to students who require credits.
- The lead volunteers/stewards, in partnership with staff, oversee programs involving school kids.

The Senior Manager of Parks introduced Paul deGreef, the new Parks Manager of Planning & Development.

5. PEOPLE PETS AND PARKS (PPP) STRATEGY

The Park Planner provided an update on PPP (A District Wide Strategy for Sharing Saanich's Parks) and the following was noted:

- Council approved the development of the Strategy in July 2021, and approved Terms of Reference in August 2021 to hire a consultant.
- The goal of the project is to conduct a transparent, clear and robust public engagement process resulting in the development of a shared use framework.
- The Strategy is specific to pets in parks and doesn't look at pet/animal policies and issues relating to private property or animals at large.
- Lees & Associates were hired to develop the Strategy. Sub-consultants include: Modus Planning, LADR Landscape Architects, and Mustel Group. The consulting team is currently conducting background research.
- The project is currently gearing up for its first of three rounds of public engagement.
- People interested in this process are encouraged to self-register for updates by visiting the PPP project webpage.
- Information gathering for the Pop-Up Dog Parks program will be wrapped into the surveys for the PPP Strategy.
- The Pop-Up Dog Park program will run in nine parks for four weeks each. Additional information is available on the project webpage.
- Another update will be provided to the Committee in the coming months.

6. URBAN FOREST STRATEGY REVIEW

The Senior Manager of Parks provided a presentation on the Urban Forest Strategy Review and Update of the existing Strategy from 2011 and the following was noted:

- This project is complex and is comprised of a broad team of Diamond Head Consultants.
- Objectives provided by staff in the Request for Proposal include a clear vision and a framework for long term urban forest management. The review will include trees/forests in rural settings as well (outside of Urban Containment Boundary).
- The consultants' work will include: reviewing the current state of forests; assessing impacts of climate change; providing information to Council and residents; identifying best practices and providing recommendations; recommending metrics and indicators for future measurement of success; conducting public engagement.

- The project is currently in the background research and review stage.
- The first stage of public engagement is expected to occur in June.
- Once all the data has been collected, consultants will complete data analysis, update mapping, and present a draft strategy in late fall which will go out for public consultation and Council feedback.
- The timeline for the project spans from March 2022 to January 2023.
- Special engagement sessions for various Saanich Committees will be held.

The following discussions ensued in response to the presentation:

- Saanich's existing Urban Forest Strategy provides for a 'No Net Loss' policy which means that any tree that is taken down must be replaced.
- Consultants will look carefully at old versus new coverage data and explain the increase in numbers.
- The 3-30-300 rule is derived from research out of the University of British Columbia which states that a great community provides for: the ability to see three trees from any house/apartment window; at least 30% tree canopy coverage; the ability to walk to a green space within 300 m. Council has directed staff to use this as a general guideline and will be considered by the consultants as part of the Strategy review and update.
- "Right tree in the right place" speaks to the consideration that is given when deciding what types of trees to plant in various spaces, and whether infrastructure may interfere once trees have matured.
- Parks are ideal spaces for planting savanna type trees that provide shade.
- There are two types of boulevard tree programs: one where staff identify sites and plant trees; and the Partnership Tree Program where Saanich provides a suitable tree and the homeowner maintains the tree.
- The Urban Forest Strategy review will provide for different policies for tree coverage inside and outside the Urban Containment Boundary.
- Roads and other infrastructure take away space for tree planting. Staff are working on identifying a balance where infrastructure and density/developments can occur while increasing tree canopy cover.
- The Boulevard Tree Programs overlap with the Urban Forest Strategy. An update will be provided to the Committee when Diamond Head Consulting has completed data analysis.

7. RECREATION UPDATE

The Senior Manager of Recreation provided an update and noted the following:

- Summer program registration opened on April 20th and summer camps were 97% sold out by 9 a.m.
- Saanich is offering 573 summer camps for 2022.
- The refund policy has been strengthened; registrants must provide five business days' notice for withdrawals from camps.
- The Continuous Access Pass was not sold during COVID because service levels could not be guaranteed; passes were re-introduced in summer 2021.
- The Gordon Head Recreation Centre (GHRC) pool shut down is scheduled to start on May 2nd for mechanical upgrades. The pool will be closed for the duration of the project and is anticipated to re-open on Labour Day weekend.
- GHRC pool staff will be transferred to Saanich Commonwealth Place. As a result, SCP will increase availability for swimming lessons.
- The Canadian National Junior Squash Championships are scheduled to occur at Cedar Hill Recreation Centre from May 5 – 8.

In response to questions from the Committee, the following was noted:

- Summer camp waitlists are long and have been for many years.
- Parents attempt to coordinate camps between various organizations and jurisdictions which creates a churn period and makes it difficult to predict demands.
- Staffing constraints influence summer camp offerings. Staff shortages are echoed across the country.
- It was suggested that prices should be increased to reduce demand for camps.
- Camps must be revenue neutral or revenue positive to ensure that people who need it have access.

8. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 5:57 p.m. The next meeting is May 25, 2022 at 4 pm.

Councillor Brownoff, Chair

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

Committee Secretary