

MINUTES
PARKS, TRAILS AND RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Held at Saanich Municipal Hall, Council Chambers
March 24, 2021 at 4:00 pm

Present: Councillor Judy Brownoff (Chair), Ted Austin, Kathleen Burton, Leigh Campbell, Pamela Carroll, Pat Danforth, Lyndsay Edgar, Amy-Jade Louie, Dexter Owen, Kyle Danielewicz

Staff: Eva Riccius, Senior Manager Parks; Cris Caravaca, Senior Manager of Community Services; Regan Pemberton Community Recreation Programmer (Child and Youth Services); Alison Chamberlain, Community Services Programmer (Older Adult Services); Tania Douglas, Senior Committee Clerk

Regrets: Annie Djijtsa

Minutes

MOVED by D. Owen and Seconded by P. Carroll: “That the Minutes of the Parks, Trails and Recreation Advisory Committee meeting held February 24, 2021, be adopted as circulated.”

CARRIED

CHAIR’S REMARKS

The Chair stated:

- The Saanich Cycle Festival has transitioned into a Geoquest. This information was launched on the website and Facebook and the event will be held between April 22nd – May 1st. Two new locations will be posted daily for participants to find. Staff are wanting to provide 20 locations featuring native or natural features, and/or public art that are easy to walk or cycle to. The goal is for participants to find the location/item, take photo and submit this, and at the end there will be prize baskets and a grand prize. Suggestions from the committee included Kings Pond, Camosun, the statue on Lochside trail of Farmer Roy, and the public art piece on the trail near Saanich hall.
- An Urban alliance article which promotes mental health and wellness through urban forests referenced a 3/30/300 rule, in which every citizen should be able to see at least three trees of a decent size from their home, the 30 is about the tree canopy, and the 300 suggests it should be about 300 metres from a person’s home door to a park. The Chair suggested maybe a photo challenge could go out to the community about Saanich residential trees and to promote the urban forest within residential areas. It was noted that Saanich’s target is 500 metres so it is very close to the suggestion in the article. Saanich is promoting trees, forests and ecosystem restoration, and it was suggested that a photo montage of submitted pictures could be done as part of this promotion.
- Saanich has been given \$1.2M to invest in ecosystem restoration including trees in various specific sites in Saanich over 10 years. This ties into the decade of ecosystem restoration.

A comment was made regarding the photo challenge that a tie-in with the Boulevard Partnership Tree program would be of benefit.

Staff were asked to provide information to the committee on the 3/30 300 photo challenge.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT & OLDER ADULT STRATEGIC AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The Senior Manager of Community Services referred to their March 24, 2021 report, and provided a background and summary of the Youth Development and Older Adult strategic and implementation plans. The following was noted:

- Both strategies have been in play for a few years. The report provided highlights, outcomes, expectations and goals.
- Regarding youth development; it has been a difficult year but staff moved forward as the services Saanich provides are very much needed.
- 2020 marked the 5th and final year of the Youth Development plan, but this is not a stopping point; everything created over the last five years are community driven, requested by youth in the community.
- All programs running are needed/desirable, and shape the lives Saanich youth. Saanich will continue to shape and support these programs, and although the strategy will end, staff will step into a maintenance mode.
- Good feedback/input has been received from schools, local organizations and youth.
- Staff do plan to go forward with a departmental strategy plan in the next couple of years, which will loop-in youth services work and make sure it is still hitting the mark.
- Staff are just getting started with the Older Adult Strategy and continue to retool/reshape the program considering the pandemic. With vaccinations coming, staff are looking for ways to launch programs in community centres/park sites, etc. in a safe manner. Funding for the Older Adult Strategy will be considered Council.
- Both of these initiatives support the Council directive of community well-being.
- Appreciation was expressed for the support of these initiatives that support vulnerable populations.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY – YEAR FIVE REPORT

The Community Recreation Programmer (Child and Youth Services) provided information on the Youth Development Strategy. The following was noted:

- At end of 5 years staff are 96% successful on the strategy's goals and priorities.
- Despite COVID, there was full participation in the youth adventures breakout camps and an increase in the reserved program for LGBTQ2 community groups at the teen centres.
- Collaborations increased, and in 2020 we partnered with Saanich Neighbourhood Place who provided mental health support for youth in the Tillicum area.
- The youth element at Horner Park was completed and an art mural may be done at the Tripp Station outdoor bike park.
- Low-cost workshops have helped youth take classes in first aid, food safe, and youth employment readiness programs. A self-expressive art program was done at Cedar Hill for low cost as well.
- Communication with youth is the most challenging strategic priority. Youth are elusive to communicate with and there is limited access to virtual technology. Staff created a community and school resource manual that went out to service groups and school district partners. The manual includes information on Youth LIFE access and provides information on grants available to youth.
- Youth spaces saw adapted and expanded programs to meet youth needs. The Pearkes teen centre was lost but staff still managed to provide some programs.
- Work continued with non-profit partners to enhance service delivery.
- In 2021 the department would like to strengthen school partnerships and continue with leadership academy and life skills workshops.
- Staff wish to provide opportunities to experience Indigenous culture and also see the completion of the Tripp station youth park.

Responses to committee comments/questions were noted:

- Youth participation has increased significantly; it helped when school partners came on board to get the word out about services being offered. It is very hard to get word out to youth.
- When the space was lost at Pearkes, they found space in the fieldhouse at Pearkes as well as the Lam room in the recreation centre.
- There was a Wheel Riders skate park program and a sports program before and staff hope to bring these programs back soon.

It was noted that program participation seems to increase when food and drink are offered, and that community partners can also be very helpful.

The Senior Manager of Community Services noted that their team has good working relationships with non-profit agencies and schools to help obtain spaces. Youth in the Tillicum neighbourhood are vulnerable and volatile and programs are needed. The programs are not doing as well as before because of the lost dedicated space. A lot of mental health services has been lost because of the pandemic, with reduced access to functional adults that can help with a variety of topics. Newcomer teen groups still need a safe space to meet. The team is looking for alternative methods to bring spaces back to provide these services.

OLDER ADULT STRATEGY – YEAR THREE REPORT

Alison Chamberlain, Older Adult Community Programmer, provided information on the work done in 2020 and the following was noted:

- The Heart images showing throughout the presentation are from the Hearts Together collaborative program which was discussed at the last meeting. About 250 older adults participated in that program.
- With funding approved in May 2020, staff have continued working from the strategic priorities that were adopted in 2017, which are to have age friendly spaces, collaboration, enhanced communications and access to information accessibility services.
- Council funded a part-time programmer one position who has supported the work required to implement the strategy (eg. Coordinate Cedar Hill club, organize dementia programs, health care access and facilitate outreach etc.)
- When the strategy is complete there will be four part-time programmers.
- Jan-March 2020 staff could support a wide range of social opportunities, and support caregivers with respite opportunities. Groups of elders self-organized themselves and partnerships expanded with Native Friendship Centre. Information on the LIFE program was circulated and the Connections guide was distributed.
- March – Dec 2020 – there was uncertainty in program planning and a challenge with changing health orders. Staff adapted to evolving health orders by allowing membership programs to reserve spots for fitness and arts, and limiting sizes of groups to be safe. The website was adapted to provide more information on partners and resources. Outside activities commenced. Park programs occurred at three parks.
- Enhanced communications and age friendly spaces were provided and the Older Adults Connections guide was published. A second welcome desk was purchased which provides helps people navigate new safety protocols and general program information.
- When we opened pools for length swimming, we received much positive feedback as there are large benefits for physical and mental health.
- Gaining safe access to programs has been the biggest challenge.

- Going forward there are challenges for older adults to connect. This past year highlights how strategic priorities relate. Staff will continue to focus on building and enhancing communication and partnerships, having welcoming spaces, and continue with programs that are relevant.

Comments from committee members and responses noted:

- With reference to using the internet, some people only have telephones, and many seniors either do not have access to technology or have a limited understanding. Any links from printed materials and the website must be done thoughtfully. Lots of people are fearful of hacking. Teaching seniors to use ipads is a good idea, some organizations do this. Staff replied that there has been lots of adaptation. Some partners have call check-ins, Cedar Hill Club switched to calling members via telephone. There are a variety of ways to reach out to people in place.
- Question was asked what the Cedar Hill Club membership numbers are as the Cordova Bay 55+ has high membership. Staff responded that they did have good membership but have moved away from membership model and hope to pick it up again in the fall.
- It was noted that men are often less connected and didn't really participate at Cordova Bay 55+ until they started a mens' exercise program. Staff replied that they are looking at how to bring forth spaces to bring all to connect. It is hoped that next year will have less restrictions regarding gathering and sharing of things like tools.
- Intergenerational programming is very good to connect youth with mature people.
- A background was provided on the origins of the Cordova Bay 55+ Centre.

CUTHBERT HOLMES RESTORATION

The Senior Manager of Parks provided information on Cuthbert Holmes and Tillicum Park and the various areas within, which include berms, ponds and wetlands, mud flats, trails, meadows, and more.

- There have been significant changes in the area and an overview was given of restoration work done since 2017.
- Part of a provincial grant will go towards Cuthbert Holmes. When the interchange was being planned this committee was good in getting money into Saanich accounts for this project.
- Park areas of restoration were explained: Area A is a berm of rock/dirt along the highway and staff planted up with over 600 trees and created a pathway. Area B are newly created wetlands, Area C is restoration work at Admirals, Area D includes trail relocation and aspen restoration, and Area E is general park restoration opportunities.
- The berm area has nice view and lots of wildlife. The rough treatment along edge is on purpose, and is typically used for mine reclamation sites. It is fortunate that the Ministry agreed to it. At this time there is lots of woody debris and rock. This slows down water flow from top of berm to reduce flow. This area is planted up with seedlings as well. Eventually we will have benches and amenities.
- Regarding Area B, the ministry biologist said we need to deal with water, so a wetland was proposed and two were constructed. They take water that's close to the interchange over to the pond and then to Colquitz river. There is also a wood duck box in the pond.
- A wetland was constructed in the centre of the roundabout to deal with highway water.
- Area C has more constructed wetland at the Admirals estuary area.
- Area D is new with a trembling aspen area and trail relocation. There is an invasive Hawthorne field to be removed and money from the ministry will help with this. This summer in-stream creek work, will result in a more diverse habitat.
- Area E has some large dead Grand fir trees and some were shortened to make wildlife trees. Some areas are very compacted where people walk to the river. These areas

have been fenced over and we will use an air spade to de-compact the soil. Volunteers built owl nests for great horned owls. One is already being used.

- There is so much wildlife in this urban park and many educational opportunities. Staff are considering putting this presentation on the Saanich website for information.

Committee comments and responses to questions:

- Suggestion made that an owl cam would be very interesting.
- Question about extra water flow will banks be damaged? Staff noted there will probably be more water from the highway with there being more pavement. There are a lot of steps for water to go before getting to the Colquitz. Staff feel there are enough barriers to slow water down.
- Comment made regarding whether there will be an asphalt pathway as hard-pressed trails can be easy to get stuck in. People with mobility issues and strollers prefer asphalt and it is also easier to walk on for older people. Staff noted they want to ensure water can flow underneath the trail and they are still sorting this out.

*** L. Edgar left the meeting at 5:28 ***

- This area is so much better then what was there before. Member would support publishing information on the website.
- Some people were unaware that the rough materials were left there on purpose and it was suggested that signage be installed. Staff replied that they will install educational signage.
- This area could be turned into a good educational program. Signage is needed and posting something on web is a great idea.
- Suggestion made that maybe short videos on different restoration projects could be put on the website. The work that was done in this area that was previously so devastated is great.

DIVISION UPDATES

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

In reply to a question about the Parks budget, it was noted that this year resources requests are challenging. The department did get funding for the Urban Forest Strategy review and for the washroom plan. Cedar Hill is in the capital budget request for each year and if anyone is interested this can be seen online. Lastly, it was noted that there are two playground options are online for the Normandy park concept if members want to vote.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 5:45 pm. The next meeting is on Wednesday, April 28, 2021.

Councillor Brownoff, Chair

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

Committee Secretary