



**WESTERN COMMON ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES
May 24, 2017**

PRESENT: Councillor Adams
Tom Musial, Chair
Shirley Jollimore, Vice Chair
Dusan Soudek
Kelly Carlton
Beth McGee

REGRETS: Jane MacNeill
Wayne Shellnut
David Patriquin

STAFF: Gareth Evans, Recreation Planning Specialist
Aaron Windsor, Legislative Support

The following does not represent a verbatim record of the proceedings of this meeting.

The agenda, reports, supporting documents, and information items circulated are online at halifax.ca.

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m., the Committee adjourned at 8:32 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – March 22, 2017 & April 5, 2017 (special)

The following changes were made to the March 22, 2017 minutes:

- Item 9.2.2 – last paragraph should read: *Ms. Jollimore made the committee aware that the Resource Opportunities Centre had received a New Horizons for Seniors grant to create events with healthy activities and meals for seniors.*

The following changes were made to the April 5, 2017 minutes:

- On page 3, “Burrow pits” should instead read “Borrow pits”.

MOVED by Shirley Jollimore, seconded by Dusan Soudek

That the minutes of March 22, 2017 and April 5, 2017, be approved as amended.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

3. APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF BUSINESS AND APPROVAL OF ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS

The agenda was approved as presented.

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES

Tom Musial stepped down as Chair to discuss an item from the March 22, 2017 minutes and Shirley Jollimore assumed the Chair.

Tom Musial asked staff about how as-built trail grades, exceeding five percent in some areas, adhere to the Western Common Wilderness Common (“WCWC”) Master Plan that speaks to “barrier free” access. They expressed concern that the elevation differences between the trails could limit accessibility for some users. Gareth Evans, Recreation Planning Specialist, agreed that the gradient could exceed five percent in some areas and that he would speak to the construction team and return to the Committee with more information at a future meeting.

5. CALL FOR DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTERESTS – NONE

6. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS – NONE

7. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS & DELEGATIONS

7.1 Correspondence

7.2 Petitions

7.3 Presentations

7.3.1 John Cascadden, Vice-Chair for McDonald Lake Residents Association (MLRA); Board Member for Five Bridges Wilderness Heritage Trust (FBWHT); Chair for HRM’s Community Monitoring Committee(CMC) for the Otter Lake Landfill dated March 28, 2017

The Committee received a presentation from John Cascaden. The presentation considered wilderness aspects of the Master Plan and its present and future recreational uses, including hiking, fishing,

canoeing, camping, etc. The presenter suggested that the Nichols Lake trails be increased from six feet wide “barrier free” trails to ten feet wide “barrier free” trails to accommodate bicycles and to improve safety. In support of this suggestion, the presenter claimed that bicycles will, in practice, use the trail and a six-foot trail will pose a serious safety threat to hikers and wheelchair users. Further, a six-foot wide trail will not provide access to an appropriate rescue vehicle in case of an injury or serve as a fire road in case of a fire.

MOVED by Beth McGee, seconded by Tom Musial

THAT the Western Common Advisory Committee recommends that Halifax and West Community Council recommend that Halifax Regional Council request a staff report amending the Western Common Wilderness Common Master Plan to upgrade construction for all the trails designated to be six feet wide “Shared Use Trails – Barrier Free Trails”, in all phases of park development, to now be constructed as ten feet wide “Shared Use Trails (no motorized vehicles)” as defined in Appendix F of the WCWC Master Plan, and ensure that “Barrier Free” specifications will be maintained.

Members discussed the cost/benefit ratio of six and ten-foot-wide trails and the trade-offs between improved access and wilderness preservation. Some members expressed that a main trail needed to be constructed first and should be the widest of the trails in order to provide a main trunk access to all subsequent subsidiary trails. Starting with a narrow, barrier-free trail limits access for other uses and makes subsequent trail development more costly.

Members of the Committee also questioned whether the Nichols Lake Trail conformed to barrier-free standards that require such trails to not exceed a gradient of 5%. Several sections of the trail now under construction appear to exceed a gradient of twenty percent 20%. Staff assured the Committee that when the trail is complete it would conform to barrier-free standards.

Members questioned whether the presenter’s suggestion to increase the width of all trails should apply only to the trail currently under construction.

MOTION PUT AND DEFEATED.

7.3.2 Kimberly Berry, Chair of Woodens River Watershed Environmental Organization (WRWEO) re: discuss observations and changes to the Bluff Trail and the possibility of a future hiking trail to connect the Park with the Bluff Trail

Kimberly Berry gave a presentation sharing her experience with the development of the Bluff Wilderness Hiking Trail (“BWHT”).

Kimberly Berry spoke on the changing uses of the BWHT since its completion in 2005 and the impact of those uses on the trail system. Those unexpected uses include:

- Large groups
- Large group off-leash dog walking and related for-profit businesses using the park
- Unauthorized camping
- Unauthorized ditch and fire pit digging with related clearing of brush and trees to fuel fires

The higher than expected number of users and unauthorized uses has led to issues with discarded hygiene products, uncollected pet waste, the degradation of the canopy and vegetation growth, and the unintended widening of trails in high traffic areas.

The Committee asked about the solutions WRWEO has considered or implemented. Kimberly Berry answered that a volunteer park stewardship program is being piloted, including the training of volunteer stewards to help change behaviors but also remediate harm. Another solution is attempting to accommodate new uses through design changes, including the placement of garbage receptacles in

advantages locations. Other solutions include educating the public about types of fires that limit damage, including bowl fires.

The Committee asked about unauthorized camping, and if the development of the WCWC, which could accommodate camping, might help take some of the pressure off the BWHT, which is an adjacent trail development to the WCWC. Kimberley Berry agreed given the parks are adjacent that that could help.

8. INFORMATION ITEMS BROUGHT FORWARD – NONE

9. REPORTS

9.1 STAFF

9.1.1 Update on the development and ongoing capital works of the Western Common Wilderness Common Master Plan

The following was before the Committee:

- A staff memorandum dated May 24, 2017

Gareth Evans, Recreation Planning Specialist spoke on the progress of the Nichols Lake trail network as detailed in the distributed memorandum.

The Committee deliberated for a time broadly on the utility of 6ft and 10ft width “barrier free” trails, the uses of the trails, wear and tear on the system from various uses, and the interconnectivity of the WCWC with other trails and parks in the area. The Chair noted that it has been five years since the original development of the WCWC Master Plan and that perhaps a review is warranted.

The Committee further discussed the tension inherent in the development of the WCWC between uses requiring wider trails (bicycles, ATVs, large groups) that invite more intensive use of the trails and narrower trails that maintain the wilderness nature of the park but restrict competing uses. Councillor Adams noted that he is happy to bring Committee recommendations to community council for consideration.

9.2 COMMITTEE

9.2.1 Continued discussion on Phase 1 of the Western Common Wilderness Common Master Plan and future phasing

(i) Walking Tour of Phase 1 Construction

The Committee agreed to the utility of a tour to be scheduled for Wednesday, June 7th at 6:30 p.m. if staff is agreeable.

(ii) Bicycle Use on Park Trails & (iii) Type and Location of Trails

This items were discussed under Item 7.3.1, see pages 2 and 3.

(iv) Cleanup of Campsites

MOVED by Dusan Soudek, seconded by Councillor Adams

THAT That the Western Common Advisory Committee recommends that Halifax and West Community Council recommend that Halifax Regional Council request staff to remove all known unauthorized campsites within the Western Common Regional Park.

The Committee discussed the language of the motion presented in the agenda, and whether “unauthorized” would be better replaced by other language.

MOVED by Dusan Soudek, seconded by Councillor Adams

THAT the motion be amended to replace “unauthorized” with “derelict, dangerous, and/or unsightly”.

MOTION TO AMEND PUT AND PASSED.

The motion before the Committee now reads:

MOVED by Dusan Soudek, seconded by Councillor Adams

THAT the Western Common Advisory Committee recommends that Halifax and West Community Council recommend that Halifax Regional Council request staff to remove all derelict, dangerous, and/or unsightly campsites within the Western Common Regional Park.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

(v) Signage

MOVED by Dusan Soudek, seconded by Beth McGee

THAT the Western Common Advisory Committee recommends that Halifax and West Community Council recommend that Halifax Regional Council request staff to post signage at major entry points to the Western Common Regional Park; to include the name of the park, a phone number or e-mail address for obtaining more information, and listing some of the basic rules of conduct within the park.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

(vi) Information Requests - None

10. ADDED ITEMS – NONE

11. Public Participation – NONE

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING - Wednesday, July 26, 2017

13. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:32 p.m.

Aaron Windsor
Legislative Support