

Samuel Wilmot Nature Area
Management Advisory Committee
January 16th, 2024, 8:00 P.M.
Diane Hamre Recreation Centre
MINUTES

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Attendance: Tom Hossie, Brian Reid, Carmen Aeillo, Rod McArthur, Margaret Zwart, Ken Mercer, Leah Bourgeois

Regrets: Kate Potter, Leanne Fernandez, Leo Blindenbach, Samantha Hansen, Patrick Bothwell

1. **Call To Order And Welcome** – in the absence of Chairperson Kate, Vice-Chair Tom presided over the meeting. He welcomed everyone and read the Land Acknowledgment

2. **Additions To The Agenda / Adoption Of The Agenda** – there were no additions to the agenda

Moved by Leah Bourgeois, seconded by Bran Reid, that the agenda be adopted.

CARRIED

3. **Adoption of Minutes of Previous Meeting:**

Moved by Carmen Aeillo, seconded by Leah Bourgeois, that the minutes of the meeting of November 21st, 2023, be approved.

CARRIED

4. **Committee Administration**

a. **Terms of Reference** – Ken reported that the Terms would be going to Council in March after which we will be able to review the final draft.

5. **SWNA Workplan:**

Tom noted that Kate has been assembling and refining the workplan. Each item was reviewed as follows:

a. This quarter

i. **LEAF program-** Leah reported that she has submitted an application on our behalf and has had some discussions with one of the principals of the program. The focus of our project would be on Tree Identification, tentatively scheduled for June of this year.

She will have further discussions with her contact concerning just what the event would look like. There was discussion by the committee about whether this should be an in-house presentation or more of a hands-on “walkabout” – or possibly some combination of the two. Leah noted that there would be some cost to holding this event, probably between \$300 and \$500. Ken advised that he should be able to cover this, either directly or by connecting Leah with the appropriate staff member. Tom thanked Leah for her work on this project.

NOTE: At this point in the meeting, we departed from the agenda to participate in a short zoom consultation about the municipality’s Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan. In developing this plan, the municipality is currently engaging in outreach, promotion, and stakeholder workshops as part of the community consultation process that will culminate in a report that will guide municipal planning for the next 10-15 years.

Committee members were asked several questions by the consultant responsible for preparing the plan related to the strengths and needs of the Samuel Wilmot Nature Area.

Re: strengths: diversity of habitat ranging from marshlands, creek valley, and abandoned fields and orchards to cobblestone beach and old growth forest; extensive trail network; the fact that this is a nature area (versus a park) and that it is within the boundaries of the municipality, something that is quite unique and which provides opportunities for educational programming; its proximity to two significant demographics – the Wilmot Creek adult/retirement community on the west side, and the Port of Newcastle on the east side.

Re: SWNA’s role in local parks and recreation – provides place for “passive” recreation such as walking, cycling, birdwatching and angling versus such things as soccer, softball, swimming, racquet sports etc. Also provides opportunity for educational programming on matters pertaining to nature and the environment.

Current or Planned Initiatives: wildflower and tree planting, trail maintenance, habitat restoration, educational programming, maintenance and monitoring of birdboxes, bat houses and bee hotels

Municipal support required?

Enhanced bylaw enforcement to reduce such things as illegal parking, harvesting of plants, littering, camping, fireworks; improved accessibility via paving to allow persons with mobility issues to make better use of the trails (in particular that portion of the trail that connects the Toronto Street parking lot to the Cobblestone beach); increased and defined annual budget to allow us to plan and deliver events etc. more effectively; improve connectivity with other planned trail systems to the north

Additional comments:

We would be very interested in a summary of comments/input provided by the general public in the survey that was conducted recently.

NOTE: members who were not present will have the opportunity to provide input. Ken/Tom will circulate the contact information for the consultant.

AT THIS POINT, WE RETURNED TO OUR AGENDA:

ii. **SWNA codes** – Tom advised that he has affixed most of the QR code labels to the posts that were installed previously, with the balance to follow. Carmen and Rod reported that they are working and are still in good condition.

b. Next 2 quarters

i. **Spring clean up** – April 20th has been selected as the date for this annual event

ii. **Bird box maintenance** – Brian advised that he , Rod and Carmen had done the fall cleanout in November but that it would be necessary to check the boxes again in early April since mice sometimes use the boxes over the winter

iii. **Invasive weed removal** – The Committee would like to tackle at least one invasive species this year. Tom suggested that Garlic mustard was a good place to start. Marg will contact GRCA to see what if any assistance or guidance it may be able to provide. This could be a public “ event “for this initiative.. with April being the preferred month.

iv. **Wildflower planting** – Leah will keep us apprised of the deadline to submit an application to OPG for funding . Brian offered to be the contact/lead again this year.

v. **Leaf ID** – as above, item a) i)

vi. **Moth week** – to be held again this year in July.

vii. **Monarch tagging** – to be held again this September. Tags have already been ordered.

viii. **Pollinator presentation** – Tom has a contact person at U of T but after some discussion, it was agreed that this is something that should perhaps wait until next year since we already have a number of initiatives planned or in place.

c. **Final quarter**

i. **Atlantic salmon** – Leah has the name of the contact person from MNRF who has a willingness to conduct some form of presentation for us. She will have further discussions with her contact concerning the nature of this event – i.e. whether an in-house presentation or a “field” exercise. Ken booked the Hamre Centre conference room for Sunday October 20th from 2-4 in to ensure we had a venue available.

ii. **Bird Box Maintenance/Monitoring** - late October or early November. Brian, Carmen and Rod

iii. **Christmas bird count** – Brian offered to coordinate something in conjunction with the efforts of other local groups.

6. **External Projects:**

a. **(Update) Treatment Plant/ Storm Drainage Pond Project** – Ken advised that work will resume in May and will require the portion of the trail leading from the Toronto Street parking lot to the beach to be closed for a period of 4-6 weeks. Signage will be requested to reroute foot and bicycle traffic during this time.

b. **(Update) Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan and Waterfront Strategy** – Ken. See earlier comments above.

c. **(Update) State of hibernaculum** – Ken advised that some clearing has now been done in the area.

d. **(Update) SWNA Management plan** – timeline for update (est. 2010) and categories relevant to the Committee.

In Kate’s absence, this item was deferred until our next meeting

7. **Other Business**

a. **By-law infractions** (camping, fishing, mountain biking/pits, harvesting) – no new concerns have been raised.

Garbage removal – Rod noted that some of the barrels were not being emptied. Ken advised that his portfolio had been changed such that another department was now responsible for this. He will connect with that department to address the issue.

8. Round Table – All Members

Carmen provided a photo of a barred owl taken in the SWNA this past week. Rod reflected on how lucky we are to have this natural space available to our community.

9. Next Meeting - February 20th – Diane Hamre at 8 pm

Adjournment:

Moved by Leah Bourgeois, seconded by Rod McArthur that the meeting be adjourned
(9:20 p.m.) CARRIED.