

MINUTES
NATURAL AREAS, PARKS, AND TRAILS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Held at Saanich Municipal Hall, Committee Room 2 and via MS Teams
770 Vernon Avenue
Thursday, February 8, 2024, at 4:01 p.m.

Present: Councillor Judy Brownoff (Chair), Jane Cameron, Catherine du Bois (via Teams), Evan Papps, Wendy Trotter, Darrell Wick and Kathleen Woodruff

Staff: Cristina Caravaca, Senior Manager, Community Services; Eva Riccius, Senior Manager, Parks (4:06 pm); Paul de Greef, Manager, Park Planning and Development (via Teams); Alix Link, Manager, Urban Forestry, Natural Areas, and Community Stewardship (via Teams); Sharon Froud, Deputy Corporate Officer, Legislative and Protective Services; Rick Hatch, Supervisor, Natural Areas, Recreation and Community Services (via Teams); Sarah Faria, Community Programmer II – Events, Volunteers and Film, Community Services; Angela Hawkshaw, Committee Clerk.

Regrets: Julian Anderson and David Little

ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES

MOVED by J. Cameron and Seconded by E. Papps: “That the Minutes of the Natural Areas, Parks and Trails Advisory Committee meeting held January 11, 2024 be adopted as circulated.”

CARRIED

CHAIRS REMARKS

The Chair made the following comments:

- On January 8, 2024, Council approved the Active Hub concept plan for Fowler Park.

PARKS EVENTS, VOLUNTEERS AND FILM PROGRAMS

The Community Programmer II gave a presentation on Parks Events, Volunteers and Film Programs (PowerPoint on file). The following was noted in response to questions and during committee discussion:

- Events requiring the use of parks and natural areas are granted permits and are responsible for any resulting damage. Additional limitations could be considered.
- Volunteer recognition awards promote intentional and appropriate appreciation.
- The Parks department is responsible for promoting events and recruiting volunteers.
- The Public Works department oversees waste management and general maintenance in public spaces.
- Emphasis could be placed on preserving the parks and natural areas for the benefit of future generations. Implementing additional restrictions could be examined.

The Senior Manager of Community Services and the Community Programmer II exited the meeting at 4:34 p.m.

ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION PROJECT - UPDATE

The Supervisor of Natural Areas, Parks, Recreation and Community Services gave a presentation on the Ecosystem Restoration Project (PowerPoint on file). The following was noted in response to questions and during committee discussion:

- Measures are taken to restore streams to their original state. Fish and wildlife protection is a priority.
- Surveys will be conducted on PKOLS to evaluate and monitor restoration efforts.
- Plot centres are observing any broad changes in vegetation and trails that have widened.
- During the COVID pandemic, PKOLS experienced heightened usage. Efforts are underway to repair and restore affected areas.
- Environmental education for the public could be enhanced.
- Tours could be offered to showcase the restoration processes.
- Improvements at Cuthbert Holmes Park, specifically the Colquitz River, are appreciated and noticeable.
- Plans to address unauthorized access to sensitive natural areas could assist in degradation.
- Permits for large groups, like schools, could promote good etiquette in parks.

30% BY 2030

The Senior Manager of Parks provided an overview of the 30% by 2030 report (on file). The following was noted in response to questions and during committee discussion:

- A healthy ecological environment is the goal.
- Staff will continue to investigate the specifics of this initiative, particularly administrative obligations and expenses.
- Gaining an experience in local natural areas enables individuals to comprehend the broader impact on our environment globally.
- The recreation model secures funding partially from fees paid by individuals. Parks rely on grants and government funding. Exploring different methods to acquire funding could be considered.
- An incentive for developers to conserve natural areas within their plans could be contemplated.
- Owners of private land that conserve a natural area could benefit from reduced property taxes.
- Approximately 500 benches are in the Saanich parks. Exploring areas that are shaded for new locations could increase usage.
- Financing for misting stations is being explored.
- The Park Amenity Donation Program requires a ten-year ownership arrangement. The owner bears the responsibility for maintenance and related fees.

RESILIENT SAANICH PROGRAM

The Senior Manager of Parks provided an overview of the Resilient Saanich Program (report on file) The following was noted in response to questions and during committee discussion:

- The Urban Forest Strategy will be considered for the April agenda.
- Future motions for Council regarding the excessive use of parks and allotted funding could be evaluated.
- Sponsoring individual natural areas could generate funding and enhance conservation.
- Droughts in February are becoming increasingly common.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion from E. Papps the meeting adjourned at 5:54 p.m.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is on March 14, 2024.

Councillor Brownoff, Chair

I hereby certify these minutes are accurate.

Angela Hawkshaw, Committee Clerk