

MINUTES

NATURAL AREAS, PARKS AND TRAILS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Held at Saanich Municipal Hall, Committee Room 2 and via MS Teams

770 Vernon Avenue

March 19, 2025 at 4:00 PM

ROLL CALL

In Attendance: Nathalie Chambers (Chair), Julian Anderson (via Teams) (4:04 p.m.), David Little (via Teams), Brian Wilkes, Michelle Watt, Kathryn Bridge, Hollis Hodson, Kathy Humphrey, Kim McIvor

Regrets: Kathleen Woodruff

Guests: Ken Whitcroft, Chair, Friends of Cecilia Creek Falls Park Society

Staff: Paul de Greeff, Manager, Park Plan and Development; Eva Riccius, Senior Manager, Parks; Jeff Patten, Asset Management Coordinator; Colton Whittaker, Committee Clerk

ADOPTION OF MINUTES

MOVED by D. Little and Seconded by K. Humphrey: "That the Minutes of the Natural Areas, Parks and Trails Advisory Committee meeting held February 19, 2025, be adopted as amended."

RESULT: Carried 9 TO 0

IN FAVOUR: Anderson, Little, Chambers, Hodson, Humphrey, McIvor, Wilkes, Watt, Bridge

OPPOSED: None

COMMITTEE BUSINESS ITEMS

CHAIRS REMARKS

The Chair welcomed committee members and the following was noted:

- Concerns were raised regarding U.S. tariffs and increasing global uncertainty.
- The potential for fast-tracking and environmental deregulation was discussed as a possible consequence.
- Committee members were encouraged to consider ways to protect nature and build resilience in unpredictable times.
- The committee reviewed members learning interests for the year. These topics will be scheduled throughout the year, accompanied by relevant presentations.
- The movement of fill in and out of Panama Flats was noted. Members highlighted the desire for changes to the development permit application process to ensure transparency regarding the origin and destination of fill.
- It was noted that fill is managed through the Deposit and Removal of Soil Bylaw 9842.

FRIENDS OF CECELIA CREEK FALLS PARK SOCIETY

The Chair for the Friends of Cecelia Creek Falls Park Society gave a presentation (PowerPoint on File), and the following was noted in response to questions and during committee discussion:

- Members expressed interest in receiving staff input on how this project aligns with other Parks initiatives and competing priorities.
- The park, originally three municipal lots, is now zoned as parkland and measures 60 feet by 150 feet.
- The previously proposed concept plan includes tree removal, but replanting efforts would restore and enhance the canopy.
- In 2009, the Quadra Cedar Hill Community Association sought community grants for funding.

Currently, the Friends of Cecelia Creek Falls Park Society is seeking partners to assist in securing funding, reducing reliance on municipal resources.

- Members discussed how this park fits into broader public land strategies and potential public land acquisitions.
- The Friends of Cecelia Creek Falls Park Society have a vision for reforestation, daylighting the storm drain, and creating a hectare of parkland, aligning with the Quadra McKenzie Plan (QMP).
- In 2009 and 2022, Saanich Parks staff presented two conceptual plans for a stream daylighting project to Council. However, funding for detailed design and construction in subsequent budget processes was not allocated.
- The Natural Areas Crew restores approximately 100m of the Colquitz River system annually at a cost of about \$750 to \$1000 per metre which includes riparian area restoration and planting.
- Students and parents have shown strong enthusiasm for using Bowker Creek as an educational resource. Lessons from Bowker Creek could be applied to Cecelia Creek Falls Park.
- The Friends of Cecelia Creek have requested that the Mayors and Councils of Saanich and Victoria ask the CRD to initiate a watershed assessment for Cecelia Creek.
- The Uptown-Douglas Plan states that Saanich supports the CRD in conducting a multi-jurisdictional watershed assessment.
- Parks maintains a five-year rolling capital plan, updated annually. However, because Council has not approved the concept plan for Cecilia Creek Falls Park, it is not included in the capital plan.
- Capital funding is determined by Council based on asset valuation, with a portion dedicated to replacements. For new work at Cecelia Creek Falls Park, a separate, one-time funding request would be required as it would be a new asset.
- Restoration projects near schools may be more likely to succeed if the school dedicates volunteer time.
- Members emphasized the need for strategic funding allocation given the number of projects requiring financial support.
- Developers could potentially contribute funding through Community Amenity Contributions (CACs). CACs can be specifically to the relevant park and if so, cannot be used elsewhere.

MOVED by H. Hodson and Seconded by K. Bridge: “That the Natural Areas, Parks and Trails Advisory Committee recommend that Council:

- **reaffirm that the community amenity contribution funds of \$30,000 from 2014 for Cecilia Creek Falls Park (Inverness Road Parkland) still exist and are available to be allocated; and**
- **direct staff to investigate the feasibility of the Cecelia Creek Falls Park concept plan and how and where it would fit within the prioritization of Parks projects.”**

The following discussion ensued:

- The previously allocated \$30,000 was for general park improvements, not specifically for a concept plan.
- It is important to formally request that staff evaluate where and how this concept plan fits within Parks project prioritization.
- Previous concept plans were endorsed by NAPT and presented to Council in 2014 and 2022. The 2022 revised concept plan was estimated to cost \$160,000, though costs have likely increased due to contaminated soil issues.

RESULT: Carried 6 TO 3

IN FAVOUR: Little, Chambers, Hodson, McIvor, Bridge, Watt

OPPOSED: Anderson, Humphrey, Wilkes

The representative from the Friends of Cecilia Creek Falls Park Society exited the meeting at 5:23 p.m

ASSET MANAGEMENT PROGRAM PRESENTATION

The Manager, Park Plan and Development and Asset Management Coordinator gave a presentation on the Asset Management Program (PowerPoint on File), and the following was noted in response to questions and during committee discussion:

- Biodiversity is recognized as a valued component of asset management.
- Engaging with the community is a component when determining asset prioritization.
- Plans are underway to develop a Natural Asset Management Plan.
- Parks and watersheds are considered part of the natural asset framework.

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

The Chair reviewed the committee's feedback on learning interests for the year and the following was noted during roundtable discussion:

- A future discussion on Beckwith Ponds and Park will take place at the next scheduled meeting.
- Involvement in local parks promotes both mental and physical health.
- A Watershed Wetland Coalition is being established to drive positive change in the community.
- Community stewardship and fostering local-level passion are key.
- The global situation is shifting, and preventing processes from swinging too far in response to global conflicts is important.
- The committee would like to discuss the possibility of recommending that Council ask staff to develop and install site-specific signage in parks to indicate the conservation status of ecosystems at a future meeting.
- The Pulling Together program aims to enhance biodiversity and the urban forest, share and learn about nature, help restore ecosystem services, improve climate resilience, and nurture community health and well-being.

MOVED by H. Hodson and Seconded by M. Watt: "That the Natural Areas, Parks and Trails Advisory Committee recommend that Council formally adopt the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Urban Forest Strategy in the Official Community Plan (OCP)."

RESULT: Failed 5 TO 4

IN FAVOUR: Chambers, Hodson, Watt, Bridge

OPPOSED: Anderson, Little, Humphrey, Wilkes, Mclvor

MOVED by H. Hodson and Seconded by M. Watt: "That the committee review the possibility of asking Council to amend the Official Community Plan (OCP) to include the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Urban Forest Strategy at the next committee meeting."

RESULT: Carried 9 TO 0

IN FAVOUR: Anderson, Little, Chambers, Hodson, Humphrey, Mclvor, Wilkes, Bridge, Watt

OPPOSED: None

ADJOURNMENT

MOVED by K. Bridge and **Seconded** by H. Hodson: “That the meeting be adjourned at 6:02 p.m.”

RESULT: Carried 9 TO 0

IN FAVOUR: Anderson, Little, Chambers, Hodson, Humphrey, McIvor, Wilkes, Bridge, Watt

OPPOSED: None

CHAIR

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

COMMITTEE CLERK

DRAFT