

SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, April 20, 2021

A Regular Meeting of the Sustainability and Environmental Advisory Committee convened on Tuesday, April 20, 2021 at 7:01 p.m. in Council Chambers, City Hall, 3000 Guildford Way, Coquitlam, BC, with the following persons present:

COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Councillor Teri Towner, Chair
Councillor Brent Asmundson, Vice Chair
Tracy Adole
Mark Ashton
Jay Ashworth
Lori Austin
Grayson Barke
Alice Hale
Jason Liao
Bonnie Razzaghi (arrived at 8:21 p.m.)
Michelle Rosenquist
Pamela Zevit (arrived at 7:27 p.m.)

REGRETS: Ivana Smolcic

STAFF: Caresse Selk, Manager Environment
Mark Zaborniak, Manager Design and Construction
Shannon Wagner, Environmental Education and Enforcement Manager
Jeri Hohn, Committee Clerk

CALL TO ORDER

At the invitation of the Chair, a Committee member introduced himself to the Committee.

ADOPTION OF MINUTES

1. Minutes of the Sustainability and Environmental Advisory Committee Meeting held on Tuesday, February 23, 2021

The Minutes of the Sustainability and Environmental Advisory Committee meeting held on Tuesday, February 23, 2021, were approved.

NEW BUSINESS

2. Cedar Drive/Partington Enhancement Project Presentation

The Manager Design and Construction previewed a video titled “Cedar Drive and Partington Creek Upgrade Project” for the Committee.

The Manager Design and Construction highlighted some particular aspects of the project via a presentation, referring to on-screen slides titled as follows:

- Cedar Drive and Partington Creek Upgrade Project
- Proposed Partington Creek Improvements
- Proposed Cedar Creek Plant List
- Cross Section of Upper Channel
- Cross Section of Lower Channel
- Project Schedule 2021 – 2024
- Project Information
- Questions and Feedback

The Committee was encouraged to keep apprised of the Project at [Coquitlam.ca/cedardrive](https://coquitlam.ca/cedardrive) and/or to sign up for information updates through the City's NotifyMe service.

The Committee considered the proposed Cedar Creek Plant List and features to improve habitat for fish, birds and other animals.

Discussion ensued relative to the following:

- Some of the benefits and challenges of the City's future expansion plans in the area, including plans to create a multi-use pathway along Cedar Drive between Deboville Slough and Minnekhada Regional Park
- The belief that a dedicated pathway through the area would be a definite boon to hikers
- The desire that the City consider installing a modest pathway through the area now, and upgrade it to something more sophisticated later on
- Whether it was anticipated that wildlife would return to or utilize the channel
- What sort of habitat restoration, if any, would be completed in the channel
- That a main goal of the project would be to replace lost riparian area to serve fish and other aquatic species, although there could be benefits to other wildlife

The Manager Environment spoke to the significant stand of invasive Japanese Knotweed in the Cedar Creek area and the City's plan, as part of the project, to replace it with a diverse mix of native plants that would attract pollinators, songbirds, and small mammals, and provide habitat improvements for wildlife. She also spoke to the work and coordinated efforts of City staff, BC Conservation Officers, and Minnekhada Regional Park biologists to reduce human bear conflicts in the area, while continuing to allow bears undisturbed access to their usual feeding grounds.

Discussion continued relative to the following:

- How future plans to open up access routes into Widgeon Marsh Regional Park would tie-in with current and future Cedar Park Project expansion plans
- That access to the new regional park would continue to be primarily along Victoria Drive as the designated arterial street, and Cedar Drive would continue to be a local, two lane road with some widening in the future
- Whether an environmental assessment for the Project was available to the public
- The process that the City follows prior to undertaking work in a watercourse, i.e. approval from provincial and federal fisheries authorities, as needed

- That the timeline for completing works in a watercourse were generally during times when water was at its lowest (least impactful to fish)
- The suggestion that the City consult with local hatchery groups and Burke Mountain Naturalists regarding plants that could improve the salmon habitat and riparian zone on either side of the planned channel
- Whether there would be a vegetation follow-up and management plan for the new area to be planted
- That the planting plan would be reviewed by City staff and included within the City's parks maintenance program
- The suggestion that staff could contact Envirowest Consultants regarding the native plants used for the nearby Pitt River Wetlands project
- The suggestion that 'slow ramps' be incorporated as a feature into the proposed channel design to allow the access of non-swimming wildlife into and out of the water
- Whether the channel design could incorporate natural shapes or side ponds that would allow fish places to rest
- The constraints of the channel design and available land and the design elements that the contractors could consider

The Manager Design and Construction shared information regarding a live, virtual event that would be held on April 21st so that the City could collect additional input from local stakeholders relative to the Project, and noted that staff were also available by phone or email should anyone wish to provide further input.

3. Light Pollution Sub-Committee Update

The Chair invited the Sub-Committee Leader to provide the Committee with an update.

The Sub-Committee Leader spoke to the purpose of the Sub-Committee to answer the question "How can we grow as a City without growing light pollution?", noted that the Sub-Committee had met three times since the last Committee meeting, and thanked a Committee member for providing the group with research and information regarding light pollution work undertaken by the City of Surrey.

The Sub-Committee Leader provided a presentation, referring to on-screen slides titled as follows:

- Light Pollution Sub-Committee Update
- Sub-committee Goals
- Top 5 Reasons to Plan for ALAN (Artificial Light At Night)
- Best Practices
- Our Best Advice Today
- Next Steps

During his presentation, he noted the Sub-Committee's best advice that the City ensure that light pollution be addressed within its policy and planning documents, including adding light pollution objectives to the Environmental Sustainability Plan (ESP) and working towards implementing a Bylaw or Lighting Strategy. He noted that such a strategy could

provide clear language and guidance for existing and planned lighting within the City's purview, and include a zoning system that would consider the needs of different urban, park, and rural areas of Coquitlam. He further noted that, as a future priority, in addition to including light pollution within the ESP, other potential next steps by the City could include a capacity check, literature review, bylaw creation, and community engagement.

The Chair expressed appreciation for the work undertaken by the Sub-Committee to date and for the thorough presentation. She invited feedback from the Committee.

The Vice Chair spoke to the following:

- His appreciation for the presentation and the Sub-Committee's work to date
- The desire that staff review the information presented, consider the next steps proposed by the Sub-committee, and the potential for incorporating them into future work plans
- That Council typically receives a greater number of requests from the public to add lighting to areas of the City than it does to reduce lighting
- The belief that some people have an excessive fear of the dark
- The City's program to switch to LED lighting to direct light where it is needed and reduce light spillage, and the desire that the City continue to concentrate on that program
- The recognition that lighting issues can be complicated
- The belief that concerns about wildlife areas and habitat changes due to too much (night) light are valid

Discussion ensued relative to the following:

- Support for the City's changeover to LED lighting and belief in the effectiveness of downward facing lights
- The desire that the City consider the consequences of cumulative lighting impacts on humans and wildlife and key ways to achieve better lighting balance through lighting design best practices
- Concern regarding the bright light pollution proximal to Rochester Park and the negative impacts it could be having on nocturnal wildlife in the park
- The suggestion that the City could have discussions with the School District and other private property owners regarding the overly bright light emitting from their facilities at night, and the impacts of such lighting on humans and wildlife
- The desire for a better balance of light in the City at night
- The understanding that LED lights, although more energy-efficient than lights used by the City in the past, can come with their own set of challenges
- The evidence-based research of the Sub-committee that more light does not equate to less crime
- The belief that continuing to retrofit lighting currently in place in the City could be a much costlier undertaking than choosing to implement a new bylaw or policies and guiding principles that could effectively reduce future lighting costs and emissions
- The desire that the City seriously reconsider its lighting policies and principles
- The suggestion that a first step could be to enlist local volunteers to do data collection relative to the status of current lighting in the City, and the desire to volunteer for such a project

- The interesting data regarding the benefits to humans and wildlife of utilizing night lights with red tones compared to brighter, white lights or green lights
- The understanding that bats will forage in red light, but will turn away from green lights and lights with the bright white tones (typical of streetlights)
- An interesting research paper titled “Urban Planning for Better Bat Habitat” prepared by Shaun O’Dea of Langara College Applied Planning Program, dated August 2020, for the District of Peachland
- Information regarding how warmer lights with lower degrees of kelvin have less negative impacts on humans and wildlife than bright lights with higher degrees of kelvin
- The understanding the City does not use lighting with a degree of kelvin higher than 3500 for its neighbourhood lighting
- The belief that current trends in residential exterior lighting design, although beautiful, are contributing to light pollution
- The psychological aspects of lighting relative to the feeling of safety

At the invitation of the Chair, the Manager Environment thanked the Sub-Committee for its hard work and spoke to why the issue of light pollution can sometimes be polarizing in communities. She requested that the Sub-Committee email copies of its research to date to staff, and noted that the City of New Westminster had implemented some actions and strategies specific to light pollution that the City could consider including within its Environmental Sustainability Plan.

4. 2021 Environmental Volunteer Celebration – Proposed Establishment of an Event Planning Sub-committee

The Environmental Education and Enforcement Manager provided an event planning update. She noted that a survey had been circulated to the Sub-committee, the members had provided their initial feedback, and that a further brainstorming session was planned for the group at the end of May.

5. SEAC Members’ Roundtable/Emerging Issues (Standing Agenda Item)

The Chair invited the Committee members to share items of information and emerging issues from their communities. The following information was shared:

- That an online public information session (webinar) for the Cedar Drive Project would be held on Wednesday, April 21, 2021
- Information regarding the City’s waste collection efforts and average diversion rates relative to those of Metro Vancouver, and that proposed waste management actions would be a component of the Environmental Sustainability Plan (ESP)
- Whether the City could consider conducting flexible and compostable packaging pilot projects with private organizations
- That public feedback provided in response to ESP consultation held in the fall of 2020 noted a desire for increased and enhanced opportunities to recycle more, and staff welcomed ideas from the community in that regard
- That the City is somewhat limited as to what it can recycle through Recycle BC
- That the City of Surrey was competing in a “City Nature Challenge” to celebrate

Earth Day and Committee members were encouraged to visit Surrey and take photos of any insects, plants, and wildlife and submit them to the iNaturalist app

- That a Committee member had created a couple of Coquitlam sites on the iNaturalist app, i.e. for Como and Lafarge Lakes, and the suggestion that the City could hold a “nature challenge” for residents at either or both parks in the future
- The suggestion that the City could hold a “lights out for Earth Day” event and promote it on social media; it was noted that the global event known as “Earth Hour” took place annually in late March
- That on Earth Day, April 22nd, the Coquitlam Heritage Society would hold a virtual event regarding “Upcycling” from 12:00-12:30 p.m., and that an exhibit for same was on display at the Coquitlam Public Library
- That the Coquitlam River Watershed Roundtable would hold an event on April 24th to pick-up litter on the Coquitlam River
- That a virtual Tri-Cities Region Food Security Town Hall event would be held on April 22nd from 6:30-8:00 p.m., and that further information and a registration link for the free event would be circulated to the Committee by email following the meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

NEXT MEETING DATE – June 22, 2021

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

MINUTES CERTIFIED CORRECT

CHAIR



Jeri Hohn
Committee Clerk