

DATE OF MEETING | SEPTEMBER 26, 2018 |

AUTHORED BY | KIRSTY MACDONALD, PARKS AND OPEN SPACE PLANNER |

SUBJECT | **UPDATE ON THE PLANNING PROCESS FOR EAST WELLINGTON PARK** |

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

To provide the Parks, Recreation and Wellness Committee with an update on the park planning process for East Wellington Park.

Recommendation

That the Parks, Recreation, and Wellness Committee receive the report titled “Update on the Planning Process for East Wellington Park”, dated 2018-SEP-26, for information.

DISCUSSION

At the meeting of the Parks, Recreation, and Wellness Committee held 2018-MAY-23, the Committee passed a motion recommending that Council:

- (a) direct Staff to work with the Nanaimo Model Airs Club to explore suitable locations for use of Model Aircraft; and,
- (b) undertake a park planning process for East Wellington Park to determine appropriate land use strategies for the site including the exploration of a pilot site for the Model Airs.

East Wellington Park

East Wellington Park is a 12.7 hectare property located at 2191 East Wellington Road. The property is zoned PRC-1 Nature Park and lies within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). The property became park in 2014 when the City of Nanaimo entered into a land exchange in order to expand the Millstone Greenway. Under the land exchange agreement, the City transferred 4.5 acres of land from a City owned parcel at 155 Westwood Road in exchange for this property. **Schedule A** outlines the park location.

The property has an irregular shape and is confined between the Millstone River on the south and a vegetated rocky escarpment to the northeast. The property falls within the floodplain of the Millstone River and seasonally floods. The property is classified as an Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA)—seasonally flooded Agricultural Field on the City of Nanaimo’s Habitat Atlas. The property was historically used as an agricultural field to grow hay and has annually been hayed since becoming a park.

Planning Process

The report dated 2018-MAY-23 outlined a four stage park planning process (see **Schedule B**). Stages 1 and 2 of this process have now been completed.

1. Public Engagement:

An open house was held at the park site on 2018-JUN-20 and was attended by approximately 200 people. The open house was advertised using onsite signage at the park, through Social Media, and by paper notice mailed to residents of the East Wellington/Jingle Pot neighbourhood.

A public input survey was available online for five weeks and at the open house. The survey was completed by 209 respondents. Full survey results are available in **Schedule C**. The majority of respondents currently use the park for dog walking (42%). Other common responses included nature viewing (16%), walking (15%), and model airplanes (14%). The majority of respondents identified with living in the East Wellington/Jingle Pot neighbourhood or Central Nanaimo. Common themes from the public input are summarized below. Many of the themes are complimentary, but some are in conflict.

- Leaving the site as natural as possible and maintaining it as a Nature Park
- Support for a trail/boardwalk around the site
- Interest in a trail to connect East Wellington and Westwood Roads
- Adding park amenities including benches, garbage cans, and a dog-bag dispenser
- Improving access from the parking lot entrance to trail/park (grade change)
- Fencing and/or revegetating the site boundaries
- Improving riparian and bird habitat
- Embracing the wetland area
- Having some productive agricultural use of the site
- Interpretive signage to explain what is special about the site
- Consideration of an area for kids to play
- Consideration for dog-off-leash use of the site
- Enforcement of dog on-leash rules
- Allowing multiple shared uses of the site (model airs)

In addition, several project stakeholders have been interviewed regarding the site, project, and potential future partnerships including; the Nanaimo Astronomy Club; Nanaimo Model Airs Club; Five Acre Farm; Agricultural Land Commission; and City staff in the Park Operations, Public Works, and Environmental departments.

2. Biophysical Assessment

Aquaparian Environmental Consulting has been hired to update the biophysical analysis of the park property that is seven years old. An updated study with site conditions, features, and recommendations is expected to be completed in fall 2018.

Model Airs

Ideal sites for aircraft flying have an open character and satisfy all Transport Canada requirements in respect to distance from an Aerodrome and populated areas. Long-term, the Model Airs would like to have one or more locations in Nanaimo that they can fly. These sites would be well situated away from cars, roads, water bodies and heavy pedestrian traffic areas and have a mowed runway area.

Staff have identified several sites which may be appropriate for flying and have shared these sites with members of the Model Airs. Sites which meet the Model Airs needs could be tested on a trial basis in the future. Sites are still undergoing the review process with the Model Airs Club members.

Next Steps

Staff will move ahead and begin Stage 3 of the planning process. Review of the biophysical assessment as well as balancing community values and needs will be a focus in this next stage. A draft "East Wellington Park Land Use Plan" will be available for review when Stage 3 is complete. Suggested sites for use by the Model Airs will also be presented in the future.

SUMMARY POINTS

- Stages 1 and 2 of the East Wellington Park planning process are now complete
- An open house to give input into the project was attended by about 200 people.
- A public survey was completed by 209 respondents.
- Stage 3 of the East Wellington Park planning process is beginning.

ATTACHMENTS

Schedule A: East Wellington Park Location
Schedule B: Approved Park Planning Process
Schedule C: Full Summary of Survey responses

Submitted by:

Kirsty MacDonald
Parks and Open Space Planner

Concurrence by:

Richard Harding
Director, Parks and Recreation