

Minutes of Mountain Drive Park Redevelopment

Virtual Task Force Meeting

January 20th, 2021

(Recorded by Lauri Leduc, Acting Assistant to Councillor Tom Jackson)

Items 1 and 2

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 p.m. by Councillor Pauls. As the new Councillor for Ward 7, Councillor Pauls stated her pleasure with the tremendous response by the Ward 6 and Ward 7 citizens.

Staff introductions were made, and an outline of the meeting format was provided by Louise Thomassin, Landscape Architect, Landscape Architectural Services (LAS). Councillor Jackson provided an overview of the role of the Task Force and thanked everyone for their interest in serving in this important decision-making process.

The role of the Task Force includes, but is not limited to, the following: guiding decisions on the redevelopment strategy, sharing ideas and goals for the park with the Ward 6 and 7 Councillors and working with staff to come up with a redevelopment plan.

Councillor Jackson then gave an overview of the park project. He sees it as a “dual function” park – that is a neighbourhood park and a community park. Councillor Jackson referenced Peace Memorial Park as an example of a successful citizen-lead project.

He noted that the last major work done at the park was approximately 10 years ago. At that time, the pathway along the escarpment was paved and concrete sidewalks along Concession Street were added for improved accessibility. Over the years, Councillor Jackson has heard many ideas on how to enhance/upgrade the park but he wants to ensure that green space/open areas are maintained.

This Task Force will provide an opportunity for citizen input to bring all of the ideas together. Councillor Jackson noted that through his Ward 6 budget, he contributed \$100,000.00 to complete this conceptual plan.

Item 3

Louise Thomassin introduced herself to the Task Force as the Project Manager and explained that she is responsible for ensuring the timeline for the project is achieved.

Ms. Thomassin made a presentation to the Task Force with the aid of a PowerPoint document. The presentation included the following information:

- Master Plan Process – what is it?
 - A planning tool used to establish a vision for future park improvements, identify a budget as well as a timeline for implementation
 - Community, City Staff and Stakeholder input is received
 - An inventory and analysis of the existing conditions, regulations, policies, etc. is made
 - Establishes a Park Vision and General Criteria for Success
 - Develops and Evaluates Feasible Design Concepts and Selects Preferred Options
 - Identifies a budget and timeline for implementation

- Site Context – boundary and features
 - West Look-Out: Views to the City, asphalt pathway/link, parking (including accessible parking), park signage, horticultural displays (donated) with recognition signage, fencing and masonry columns, tree planting and informal seating
 - Escarpment: Cliff faces and significant woodlands
 - Park Proper: Views to the City, asphalt pathway/link, playground structure and swings, washroom building with covered outdoor overhang, spot lighting and utilities, mature trees, park signage, low masonry wall, chain link fence and interpretive signage

- Constraints and Considerations
 - Provincial -Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC) and Accessibility Standard for the Design of Public Spaces
 - City of Hamilton – Official Plan (Natural Heritage Plan), by-laws, and related masterplans
 - Universal – Crime Prevention through Environmental Design

- Project Timeline
 - Task Force start-up and Stakeholder Engagement (Jan 2021) leading up to a Finalized Masterplan Report that is available to the public in December of 2021

Item 4

Cynthia Graham, Manager, LAS, addressed the Task Force about the budget for the project. Ms. Graham explained that her role is to ensure the process goes smoothly, that staff are supported and, in conjunction with the Ward 6 and 7 Councillors, to get the funding/corporate finance piece in place.

Ms. Graham stated that there is a placeholder holder in the 2023 budget for the landscape component of the park. However; nothing is confirmed until/unless approved by City Council.

The funding for the project comes from a combination of three sources: the City's Capital Levy (taxation money), Development Charges (the fees for new developments paid by developers and distributed to parks across the City) and area rating (Councillor's specific Ward money to make up any potential gaps).

Item 5

Rom D'Angelo, Director, Energy, Fleet and Facilities Management, introduced himself to the Task Force and explained that his department is a partner in the park redevelopment project. They have committed to building a new field house (washroom building) based on the needs of the park and with the input from the Task Force.

Mr. D'Angelo introduced Janet Warner who is the Acting Manager of Strategic Planning and Capital Compliance. Ms. Warner explained that the washroom building will be maintained in the same location that it currently is. The direction of the doors/access/canopy may be altered however; as part of their security review. The estimated cost of replacing the structure is between \$500,000-\$800,000. She noted that the new building will include a universal washroom. Demolition and replacement will most likely take place in 2022.

Item 6

Task Force members used this time to make comments and suggestions as well as ask questions of staff. Issues and themes raised included, but were not limited to:

- better lighting is required; concerns that lighting needs to be improved now and not wait for 2 years until the project is constructed
- don't eliminate the canopy on the washroom building; it's important for shade (for children and seniors)
- a request to add a few parking spaces (off of East 43rd Street) was made; but concerns were also expressed that people do not want to lose green space to parking
- keep winter activities in mind; splash pad in summer and skating in winter (Councillor Jackson noted that the Recreation Department has a program whereby volunteer groups can offer and then enter into an agreement with the City for the volunteers to make a rink)
- desire for a leash-free park; try to get some financial support from pet supply companies and veterinarians
- we need to encourage children to use parks again; ideas such as: a horseshoe pit, mini skateboarding park, a sports wall, disc golf, a butterfly garden, bird perches, a performers gazebo, and a video screen in the field house for movie nights were some suggestions

- a request was made to fill in the gulley between East 43rd Street and Upper Gage (staff will be conducting a geo-technical analysis of the soil to ensure that it isn't for stormwater purposes before this is considered however)
- need to keep in mind the changes/plans are being considered for Eastmount Park and the impact this may have on Mountain Drive Park
- the fence at far east end of the park is in bad repair; a lot of people crawl up the hill and come over it; there is graffiti on some parts of the fence as well; consensus was that fencing in general needs to be addressed
- don't lose sight of the green space when developing ideas for other activities in the park
- there needs to be more benches; offer people to donate money for a bench in memory of a loved one
- add a water fountain that has a dog bowl and is accessible as well as outdoor gym/fitness stations
- add picnic tables, a small soccer field, a few basketball nets
- some parts of trail get narrow; perhaps widening needs to be looked at
- better accessibility/connections are needed; particularly at East 43rd for those with strollers, bikes and mobility needs
- don't go too heavy on the recreation component; less invasive recreation ideas are more suitable
- overall consensus and desire to protect the mature trees and ensure that they are not cut down. Suggestion to plant new trees in the east end of the park
- request to enhance the historical signage and have binocular viewing stations (Councillor Jackson noted that during the last term of Council, a greater number of vista views along the escarpment (where appropriate) were approved)

Item 7

The Task Force decided that the selection of a Chair and Vice Chair would take place at the next meeting. Councillor Pauls and Councillor Jackson will develop a brief guideline as to what the roles involve. Members are then asked to put forward their name if they are interested in either of these positions.

It was noted that Ed Valtenberg offered (verbally) to serve as chair and that Micheline Rancourt (via WebEx chat) noted her desire to be the vice chair. A suggestion was made to think about having gender equity in the two chair positions.

J-P Oddi noted that he may also be interested in serving, but that more information is required on the time commitment and tasks and that it may be prudent to give everyone time to absorb the information.

Item 8

The Task Force agreed to hold their next virtual meeting on Wednesday March 10th from 6 to 8 p.m.

Meetings will then be held on a monthly basis on the second Wednesday of each month from 6 to 8 p.m. until June.

Louise Thomassin will prepare a debrief ahead of the meetings to present to the task force and keep them apprised of project updates.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:52 p.m.