



Environment & Sustainability Experts Panel Minutes

December 11, 2020

12:30 p.m.

Virtual

- Present:**
- Kieran Hanley, MBA - Sustainable Economic Growth, Chair
 - Edmundo Fausto, Sustainability Coordinator
 - Joel Finnis, PhD - Climate Science & Resilience
 - Dennis Knight, MSc, MCIP - Sustainable Urban Planning & Economic Growth
 - Pablo Navarro - Socio-cultural & Quality of Life
 - Joseph Daraio, PhD, PEng - Sustainable Urban Planning & Resilience
 - Michel Wawrzakow, PEng, PGeo - Natural Environment & Resilience
 - Shanna Fitzgerald, Legislative Assistant
- Regrets:**
- Brian Head, Manager - Parks & Open Spaces
 - Krista Langthorne, BA, SEBT - Resilience & Natural Resources
- Others:**
- Mike Adam, Operations Supervisor-Parks
 - Marianne Alacoque, Transportation Systems Engineer
 - Garrett Donaher, Transportation Engineer
 - Warren Martin, Stantec Consulting
 - Carolyn Longaphie, Trace Planning and Design

- 1. CALL TO ORDER**
- 2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**
 - 2.1 Adoption of Agenda**

Moved By Joel Finnis

Seconded By Michel Wawrzkow

That the agenda be adopted as presented.

MOTION CARRIED

3. ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES

3.1 Adoption of Minutes - October 23, 2020

Moved By Kieran Hanley

Seconded By Joel Finnis

That the minutes of the meeting held on October 23, 2020 be adopted as presented.

MOTION CARRIED

4. BUSINESS ARISING

5. NEW BUSINESS

5.1 Update of Tree Planting Proposal

The Sustainability Coordinator provided an update to the Committee on the proposal to enhance the city's urban forest for Carbon Sequestration through the Climate Change Challenge Fund.

The City proposed to expand the St. John's urban forest's ecological services within 11.3 hectares through reforestation. The proposal is focused on creating a greenhouse gas reservoir in the biomass of the trees planted, as well as the reduced emissions from reduced site maintenance. This proposal supports the objectives of the City's Urban Forest Management Master Plan and provides several co-benefits including increasing biodiversity and increasing the strength and resiliency of the urban forest in response to climate change.

The proposed approach included planting large stands of native trees in beds with additional specimen trees planted along trails promoting naturalization of City open space while maximizing survival rates and carbon storage potential (within a 20-year time period). This project, if

funded, is intended to take place in the planting seasons of 2021 and 2022.

During discussion, the following was notable:

- The Committee encouraged the collection of detailed greenhouse gas reduction estimates. It is anticipated that there will be a carbon offset framework to which a project like this could apply. There are limited opportunities for these types of projects and having this on the list to be financed is important.
- Carissa Brown is working on green infrastructure and an urban forest assessment for the island portion of the Province so there is opportunity to get information on what species work best on the island and quantifying what the additional benefits are. This may help inform what gets planted and where.
- The confidence in the survival rate is due to the health of the trees being planted as well as the site selection and remediation work. Additionally, there will be a warranty period for the trees and the method used will ensure the best chance for survival.

5.2 Kelly's Brook Trail Review/Comments

[Kelly's Brook Trail Project Engage Page](#)

Marianne Alacoque, Transportation Systems Engineer gave a quick overview of the Kelly's Brook Trail project. Also in attendance were:

- Mike Adam, Operations Supervisor - Parks
- Garrett Donaher, Transportation Engineer
- Warren Martin, Stantec Consulting; and
- Carolyn Longaphie, Trace Planning and Design

Kelly's Brook Shared-Use-Path is the first catalyst project coming from the Bike St John's Master Plan. The shared-use path will extend from King's Bridge Road to Columbus Drive. It is mostly in place as a granular walking trail today, linking several neighbourhoods through an important east-west greenway that largely parallels Empire Avenue. Its goal is to provide an attractive and continuous 4.8 km active transportation route in St. John's, connecting popular destinations and amenities along the way. The shared-use path will be designed for use by people of all ages and abilities. The

potential trail way was outlined on a map for the members of the Committee.

The shared-use path will be professionally designed by a team of consultants working closely with City staff. Part of the consultant's contract is to plan and execute public engagement on the design elements, with a focus on the environment, trail users and impacted neighbourhoods. The City is specifically looking for public feedback to inform these design elements: lighting, surface material choice, trailhead and rest area design, and wayfinding.

There has been quite a bit of public discussion about the potential environmental impacts of working on the section of trail between Portugal Cove Road and Kings Bridge Road. The City is still collecting data before making any final decisions about this area.

Throughout the design and consultation process for these trail upgrades, there will be careful attention paid to the environment, wildlife habitat, and impact on neighbourhoods. The consultant team will:

- Investigate impacts to wildlife, habitats, nesting areas and movement patterns – considering both construction and long-term impacts.
- Explore alternatives and relative environmental impacts along Rennie's River of installing boardwalk, retaining walls, or shifting the preliminary route alignment.
- Complete a Tree Inventory, Tree Protection Plan, and Landscaping Plan. The Tree Protection Plan will identify trees to be retained and protected through the construction process. Where feasible to do so efforts will be made to preserve existing trees and natural features. In areas where removal of existing vegetation is necessary replacement planting will be required.

The shared used trail would be 3m wide with stable surface material. Consultants are still exploring options for surface materials. The Committee was provided with the link to the engage page for [Rennie's River Flood Mitigation](#).

During the subsequent discussion, the following points were made:

- Kelly's Brook trail has minimal environmental impacts.
- If the flood mitigation goes ahead as proposed that would have more of an environmental impact than paving the trail.

- There are three segments of flood mitigation. The proposed multi use trail width will be given consideration when designing the berms. There will also be consideration made for the trees and vegetation along the trail.
- It was questioned if there has been consideration for the safety of pedestrians/cyclists crossing Rennie's Mill Road at Empire Avenue. This intersection has bad sightlines and a history of collisions. This will be a design challenge, particularly if the shared-use path route stays along Empire Avenue instead of along Rennie's River.
- There are significant design challenges where Empire Avenue meets with Kings Bridge Road. The area is congested and there is not a lot of space to work with.
- The stretch between Portugal Cove Road and Kings Bridge Road is problematic. It was questioned if there has been consideration for splitting the route for cyclists and pedestrians on that stretch of the trail. In response it was advised there are limitations of the width of the street and space constraints for accessibility would mean it would have to be a shared use path facility.
- Street crossings along the trail would be improved using curb bump outs and raised crosswalks where possible.

Members were invited to provide any further comment via email and questions can be directed to City staff.

5.3 Update on Sustainability Plan Public and Stakeholder Engagement – Summary of Input to Date

The Sustainability Coordinator provided an update and summary of the public and stakeholder engagement of the Sustainability Plan.

5.4 Discussion - Next Steps in 2021

Next Steps:

Engage and Refine our Future Scenario:

- Continue supporting public engagement and education activities.
- Finalize Strategic Level Community Risk Assessment.
- Implement an Energy and GHG Community model for St. John's.

Set a Path Forward:

- Characterize an equitable path to NetZero using the model's environmental, economic, health and social indicators.
- Identify a path forward to address risks of high consequence to the community.

6. OTHER BUSINESS

7. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting is scheduled for January 29, 2021 12:30 - 1:30 pm.

Purpose of next meeting:

1. Drive Thru Referral
2. Engagement Update
3. Presentation by the Chief Municipal Planner - Overview of Municipal Development Regulations

8. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:05 pm.

CHAIRPERSON, KIERAN HANLEY