

Report of PPPAC Meeting – Thursday, Oct 11, 2007

Present – Duncan Morum, Paul Doane, Leanne Chisholm, Vivek Tomar, Harald Norve, Allan Robertson, Stephen Rice, Stewart MacMillan, Peter Bigelow, Brian Phelan

Regrets – Anne West, Gerrie Masters, Janet Kitz, Kate Greene, Phil Read, Sue Uteck

Venue – The meeting was held at Point Pleasant Lodge.

1) Master Plan review parameters – Stewart MacMillan circulated a set of statements developed by the committee overseeing the PPP International Design Competition. They were established to guide design teams in developing approaches to the Park's restoration. It was suggested that they would be useful for committee members when reviewing the draft of the Master Plan. A copy of the statements is attached.

In response to a question about when the draft of the Master Plan would be available for review by the PPPAC, Peter Bigelow indicated that it is difficult to be precise. The initial draft is currently under review by an internal HRM committee, expected to be completed by early November. The consulting team would then have an opportunity to respond to comments and to make necessary amendments, expected to be completed by mid-December. The amended document would then be provided to both the PPPAC and the external 'specialist group' used during the design competition to ensure different technical aspects of the Park were 'covered' – geology, ecology, soils, trees, history, anthropology, etc. After review by the PPPAC and the specialist group, public presentations would take place early in the New Year. Given reasonable acceptance at this stage, a presentation to Council would be made in February or March of 2008.

2) Fall Works Program – Peter Bigelow outlined the Fall works program – a combination of thinning and spacing (Cable Road area particularly), removal of hazardous snags throughout the Park, and planting in certain sites (Sugar Maple, Red Oak, Black Ash, White Ash, Yellow Birch, Eastern Larch, Ironwood, Pussy Willow, American Elm, and Black Cherry – all deciduous, as conifers do not grow well when planted this time of year).

3) Potential Foundation Strategies – a PPP foundation was established by HRM after Hurricane Juan in hopes of raising money for the Park. The foundation has been dormant partly because there hasn't been a champion for it, and partly because there weren't any tangible park projects to champion. With the upcoming completion of the Master Plan, a series of renewal projects for the Park is expected – projects that could be attractive to potential donors. Given that the Community Foundation of Nova Scotia has experience in organizing and funding foundations, it was agreed that Allison Kouzovnikov, Executive Director of the Community Foundation of Nova Scotia would be approached to ask if she could address the PPPAC on this topic. (Subsequent to the meeting Allison agreed to make a presentation to the committee at its November meeting.)

Other Business – During a discussion of the need for an updated Park User Survey, the contention that the Park may currently be 'at capacity' was questioned. A committee member pointed out that, in comparison to other parks, nationally and internationally, PPP appears to be under-used much of the time. Staff agreed that it certainly isn't at capacity most of the time, but that during certain times of the year and during certain special events, it is too heavily used, and damage occurs. No one is ever turned away, however, and the recent policy of asking visitors to stay on pathways helps.

Point Pleasant Park Advisory Committee Guiding Statements for the Point Pleasant Park International Design Competition

General Guiding Statements

25 February 2005

We value the intrinsic scenic characteristics of the Park and wish to heighten their advantages or mask their shortcomings through solutions that are feasible, sustainable, and achievable.

- a) Improvements are needed to enhance the Park, but we feel improvements must not compromise the natural character of the Park.
- b) As a significant place of civic pride, we feel that all work done within the Park must reflect this pride in quality of design, appropriate materials selection, craft, construction, and maintenance.

Point Pleasant Park is a coastal woodland park that should express the vernacular landscape of the surrounding Nova Scotian region.

We recognize that Point Pleasant Park is a unique landscape and a source of civic pride within Halifax Regional Municipality and its parks system. It is cherished by thousands for a wide variety of highly personal reasons. We believe that Point Pleasant Park must be accessible to all.

We wish to foster a sense of care and stewardship in how we use, operate, and manage the Park in order to protect its natural beauty and long term ecological health. We recognize the need to balance activities in order to maintain the Park's ability to provide a casual, enjoyable, friendly community atmosphere while simultaneously providing opportunities for solitude and quiet enjoyment.

Selected cultural elements in the Park that have local, provincial, and national historic significance must be financially supported, maintained, and sensitively interpreted to protect their historic value for generations to come.

Over the years Point Pleasant Park's landscape, structure and its intrinsic qualities have been significantly altered. We wish to restore the distinctive characteristics of the park that include:

- a balance between a sense of solitude and a sense of community
- a sense of the forest being a refuge from the surrounding city
- interplay of views hidden and views revealed while travelling through the landscape of the Park
- a sense of extensiveness of the forest
- variety and quality of spaces

We realize that some of the Park's renewal-related issues require immediate attention. We wish to see results from short term renewal projects within 5 to 10 years, medium term renewal projects within 10 to 20 years, and long term renewal projects within 20 to 40 years.

1.3 Competition Goal and Objectives

Within the theme of Regenerate Restore Renew, the goal of the competition is to generate designs that:

- a) define a comprehensive, ecologically sustainable vision for Point Pleasant Park, its urban forest and its coastal landscape;
- b) choreograph the Park to enhance it as a place of interest, enjoyment, and discovery for citizens and visitors;
- c) explore recreation, education, and programming opportunities that enhance the casual, enjoyable and friendly atmosphere of the Park;
- d) restore and enhance the landscape character of the park that existed before Hurricane Juan;
- e) interpret the importance of Point Pleasant Park to its urban context on the Halifax peninsula and within HRM;
- f) suggest a phased approach to master plan implementation that incorporates specific renewal projects beginning within the following time frames: 1 year, 2 to 5 years, 6 to 20 years, and 21 to 50 years;
- g) set the direction for future management and operations plans for the Park.
- h) provide creative solutions to screening and/or interpreting the neighbouring container pier and helipad in the lower parking lot;
- i) ensure that the main entrances to the park reflect the park's sense of place, are welcoming, and effectively orient park users;
- j) ensure that the parking lots place safe pedestrian movement first, are environmentally and user friendly, and support multiple uses;
- k) provide an amenity building;
- l) define cultural programming spaces for that do not adversely impact on the forest or fortifications;
- m) provide a strategy for shoreline protection.

Note: These objectives pertained specifically to the design competition and will be modified for use in the master plan.

1.4 Design Principles

All competitors must adhere to the design principles listed below.

1.4.1 Balance

The design should balance all aspects of the park in order to maintain its ecological health, its usage, its natural beauty and its sense of place in Halifax. Point Pleasant Park needs to be balanced in many ways: for example, between use and ecological protection; between forested and open areas; between community activities and solitary activities; and between the natural and the cultivated.

1.4.2 Ecological Sustainability

A primary objective of the park's renewal is to achieve a healthy forest environment. Therefore, the design must result in a sustainable environment for all aspects of the park's ecosystem. The master plan must lead to work that will eventually create harmony between the flora, fauna, soils and hydrology of the park.

1.4.3 Park Use

The design should describe park activities that can exist with minimum conflict between uses. The design must reflect the park's primary character as a casual, enjoyable, friendly place that provides opportunities for solitary and social enjoyment. The design should integrate the various uses in such a manner that the park's carrying capacity is not exceeded.

1.4.4 Context and Connectedness

The design must recognize and reflect the various contexts within which the park exists, for example, the HRM urban landscape, the HRM park system, local and regional geography and its historical social context.

The design must demonstrate connections on many levels. Ecological connections must exist vertically from treetop to bedrock, as well as horizontally from the city through the forest and to the ocean. Nature-to-nature connections must support the long-term ecological health and natural beauty of the park.

The people who use the park are connected with its ecosystem. Public feedback indicates that park users love the park's environment for its intrinsic natural beauty, its educational value, and its contrast with the urban environment.

Point Pleasant Park has long been a place where people meet in a beautiful natural setting. Whether through casual recreation or at formal ceremonies, the park is seen as a very special place of social connection and community. It is also valued as a place where people connect with personal, local, provincial, and national history.

1.4.5 Accessibility

Point Pleasant Park must be accessible to all and should embrace universal design principles. Universal design seeks to create products and environments that are useful to and useable by everyone, and that do not segregate or stigmatize any group of users. Preferably the same means of use is provided for all; identical wherever possible and equivalent when not. While the park must be accessible to all, conflicting uses may necessitate that not all of it be accessible to all users at all times.

1.4.6 Implementation Process

The design for Point Pleasant Park must be capable of being translated into a master plan that can be implemented in phases. Projects within the master plan must have the ability to be phased in a way that is economically achievable in both the short term and long term. Phased projects should not have to rely on future phases in order to demonstrate a sense of completion and to be useable.

Phased projects must be environmentally friendly in form and function, minimizing conflicts with adjacent uses and concurrent activities.

Note: These principles pertained specifically to the design competition and will be modified for use in the master plan.