

RICHARD ST. BARBE BAKER AFFORESTATION AREA (RSBBA) MEETING @ CITY HALL, MARCH 29, 2017 - MEETING NOTES

In attendance were 18 people, representing approximately 12 interest groups, including: Saskatoon Nature Society, Southwest Offleash Recreation Area, Wildlife Federation, NE Swale Watchers, SOS Elms, Ducks Unlimited, RM of Corman Park, Fatlanders Fat Tire Brigade, Meewasin Valley Authority, and residents of Cedar Villa, Montgomery Place, and Meadowgreen. Also present were: Hilary Gough, Saskatoon Ward 2 Councillor and Sheri Benson, MP Saskatoon West.

Councillor Gough indicated that in the short-term, RSBBA is to be included in Saskatoon's "overall nature strategy" and the next step is the SW Sector Plan, which she estimates may take 3-5 years to develop. If RSBBA is "taken over" by the city, she notes the city has "anxiety" about how the plan would be funded and is something to think on and determine in the future.

- Interesting fact: On December 28, 1978 it was proposed that RSBBA become a park; January 2, 1979, Saskatoon city council recommended the same. My question....if this is the case, why is it necessary to include RSBBA in the SW Sector Plan? If the area was already designated as a park, it seems there should be no need to undertake a similar process, nor should it take 3-5 years.

Areas of concern:

- All in agreement we would like to see proper barricades installed, in an effort to reduce illegal dumping of trash and other household items and to reduce illegal/negative activities (i.e. bush parties, off-roading, drug use and other criminal activities).
 - Need to restrict vehicle access while still making it possible for SK Energy vehicles and personnel to access the area when needed (i.e. on the west section of RSBBA, which we unofficially refer to as the "blue pipe trail", between the Southwest Offleash Recreation Area and the Civic Operations Centre).
 - Also recognize that implementing barriers may seem to reduce unwanted activities, however in reality, the issues may just be shifted to another area of the park or closer to Cedar Villa.
 - Proximity to City Landfill site is an issue as people don't want to pay the landfill fee or want to dispose of materials which are not accepted at the landfill (i.e. tires, oil, etc.) therefore they illegally dump these materials in the afforestation area. Cleanup efforts in 2015 and 2016 were successful in removing several thousand kilograms of waste from the afforestation area, however it is discouraging to see how quickly new waste materials are illegally dumped in the afforestation area. Offenders are aware that the area is not well-patrolled, therefore low risk of negative repercussions for their illegal behaviours and with few barricades installed, it is not difficult for them to continue this behaviour without being seen.
- Need to broaden community awareness - knowledge of the area needs to be shared in community forums and also needs to be shared with emergency services such as police and fire departments. In the past, there has been much confusion with emergency services dispatchers as they seem to be unaware that this land falls within city limits and as such, falls within their area of service.

- Increase emergency service response times - in the past, response times were slow due to confusion at dispatch and lack of signage in the area. SPS and Fire Services were seemingly unaware that the area is part of Saskatoon, and as such, also their responsibility/part of their service area.

Ideas for reducing crime:

- Install additional lighting, particularly at the dog park
- Restrict vehicle access
- Signage - noting the name of the area and perhaps signage explaining a brief summary of the history of the area
- Enforcement
- Increased police patrol, particularly air patrol
- Education - letting people know the area exists, sharing the history and significance, and informing them of the ways in which the area can/should be used and enjoyed
- Increased “natural surveillance” - i.e. those who utilize the park regularly can have a heightened awareness/be “keeping an eye out” and reporting illegal activity
- Unified efforts from all interested stakeholders

Positive uses of the RSBBA:

- Trails are intended to be multi-use (year-round), with cyclists yielding to pedestrians
- Jeff Hehn (Fatlanders) is working with an organization called, “Open Spaces”, to cultivate trails and consideration has been given to whether trees need to be removed or not
 - The only trees removed were caraganas (if they were on the trail), in order to make old trails passable again.
 - No new trails have been cut; trails that appear new are pre-existing trails which have been groomed and restored; as the trails were previously mapped out, Jeff and Open Spaces were able to use maps and GPS to cut trails according to Canadian National Park guidelines (i.e. which would be the same guidelines used in parks such as Prince Albert, Banff and Jasper National Parks) which limits the use of power tools. The majority of trails were restored by hand.
 - In places where signs of natural reforestation was evident (i.e. large pine trees regenerating several young pine trees), the trails were re-directed around the baby trees.