

# Lake Ontario Park Revitalization Study

## Staff Advisory Group Workshop #1: Meeting Minutes

*Time and Place:* Thursday, February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 7:00-9:45, Press Lounge, Portsmouth Olympic Harbour

*Attendees:*

1. Councillor Beth Pater (City of Kingston Council: District representative)
  2. Councillor Floyd Patterson (City of Kingston Council)
  3. Mark Fluhner (Director, City of Kingston Culture and Recreation)
  4. Kristine Hebert (Parks & Open Space Co-ordinator, City of Kingston)
  5. Robin Etherington (Manager, Culture and Heritage, City of Kingston)
  6. Marc Letourneau (Heritage Planner, City of Kingston)
  7. Jason -Kovacs-- (PhD Student – University of Waterloo: observer)
  8. George Speal (Kiwans Club of Kingston)
  9. Jim Cannon (Portsmouth Villager's Association)
  10. Clint Hierlihy (Portsmouth Villager's Association)
  11. Suzanne Hamilton--- (Portsmouth Villager's Association)
  12. Hans Vorster (Commodore's Cove resident's association)
  13. Gerry de Jong (1000 King Street West resident's association)
  14. Enid Barnett (1000 King Street West resident's association)
  15. Mary Vincent (Friends of Lake Ontario Park)
  16. Alida Moffatt (Friends of Lake Ontario Park)
  17. Wendy Mayoff ---- (Friends of Lake Ontario Park)
  18. Eartha (Urban Aboriginal Community)
  19. Krista Wells (Providence Continuing Care)
  20. Mark Christie (Ontario Realty Corporation)
  21. Blayne Mackey (St. Lawrence College)
  22. Mark Lewis (Kingston Chamber of Commerce)
  23. Jennifer McKendry (Historian, study consulting team)
  24. Carl Bray (Heritage consultant, lead consultant/facilitator)
- (Regrets: Rob Carnegie (Kingston Economic Development Corporation); Jay Gazeley (Cataraqui Golf & Country Club))

Carl Bray called the workshop to order at 7:05 and gave a brief introduction to the study and to the workshop. He asked each person in attendance to identify themselves and the group for which they were the representative, and to summarize the issues they wished to see addressed in the study.

*Attendees/Stakeholder or interest group/ Issues and concerns on Lake Ontario Park :*

1. Hans Vorster-President of the Commodore's Cove Condominium Association
  - a. Would like to see the park remain as a community park,
  - b. Would like improvements to the park re: maintenance and care.
2. Beth Pater- District Councillor-Portsmouth
  - a. Is present to hear ideas for the park from the community

3. Jim Cannon- President Portsmouth Village Community Association
  - a. There is a strong local interest in retaining the park as a public asset.
  - b. Sees the need to increase programs and facilities in the park to promote and enliven the site.
  - c. Strong history of the park and the village users.
4. George Speal – (former Mayor) represents Kiwanis Club.
  - a. Kiwanis Club instrumental in early operations of the park/vested interest
  - b. Club ran dances/campground/amusement park late 40-early 50's.
  - c. Strongly advocates preservation of waterfront land for public use
  - d. Park is a resource for entire City of Kingston plus tourism factor.
  - e. Park needs a balance of recreational and leisure uses.
5. Krista Wells - Province Continuing Care Mental Health Services Planner
  - a. Share boundaries with park/ shared uses and interest in open spaces
  - b. Access to open spaces needed for client programs
  - c. Ability of open space to be therapeutic for clients.
  - d. Sees pressures on their site that impact park
6. Mark Lewis – 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President of the Chamber of Commerce
  - a. Part of his mandate is to broaden the Chamber 's community involvement in projects across the City of Kingston
  - b. Sees benefits to the city and tourism through redevelopment of the park.
7. Mark Fluher/ Kris Hebert/Marc Letourneau- City staff
  - a. Interested in long public use history of park
  - b. Here to listen to the community
8. Jason Kovacs-PHD student Waterloo- interested in public process
9. Mark Christie- Gen Manager Sales and Acquisition Ontario Realty Corp
  - a. As the land owner of the PCC site, ORC has an interest and tie in to what we do with the park site and pathway connectors
10. Clint Hierlihy- Vice President of Portsmouth Village Community Association
  - a. Feels very strongly about the legacy' of the park and what we will leave for future generations.
  - b. Can see partnership scenarios benefiting the park
11. Suzanne Hamilton- Portsmouth Village Associations Member ( for Liz Schell)
  - a. Sees the need for continued public access to the park
  - b. Beautiful space and free to public
  - c. Well used by citizens
12. Floyd Patterson- Councillor Sydenham District
  - a. Sees park as valuable public asset
  - b. Attending to listen to feedback from group
13. Eartha –Aboriginal Community Alliance
  - a. Concerns for first people historical and continued uses in the park

- b. Ceremonial practices in park important to native community
  - c. Community liaison through public events such as Pow-wows
  - d. Wants the park to remain as natural as possible
  - e. Recognition or interpretive recognition of first peoples interest history in the park
14. Enid Barnett- Representative from 1000 King Street West
- a. Has lived overlooking the park form many years 9 3<sup>rd</sup> floor)
  - b. Has seen many changes in park
  - c. Maintenance and neglect in recent years is discouraging
  - d. Looks forward to positive changes in the future
15. Gerry DeJong- Representative from 1000 King Street West
- a. Sees lack of maintenance in the park as a big concern
  - b. The vision for the park should include the needs of the residents and tourists alike.
16. Blayne Mackey- Executive Director of Facilities St Lawrence College
- a. Sees use on the park and the college being compatible
  - b. Possibility of shared amenities between college and park ( i.e) use of residences for major events /accommodation needs
  - c. Potential ties –ins to some programs in the college- renewable energy program
  - d. Wind turbines are being considered at the Wolfe Island and Dupont sites. There are no current plans to consider any at Lake Ontario Park.
17. Wendy Mayoff Friends of Lake Ontario Park
- a. Expatriate from Montreal
  - b. Sees deterioration of the buildings in the park on a daily basis
  - c. Believes the city should take more care and pride in the park as it has a lot of potential.
18. Mary Vincent – Friends of Lake Ontario Park
- a. Will the park be sold?
  - b. Will the park be leased out?
  - c. Is there a (hidden) proposal for the park?
  - d. Hopes this process for visioning is not a ‘sham’ and that the city politicians/Council agree that it is to remain a community park.
  - e. Campground revue was flawed.
19. Alida Moffatt - Friends of Lake Ontario Park
- a. Spoke to preservation of park as valuable public space

Jennifer McKendry then presented a summary of the report she has prepared on the history of Lake Ontario Park, highlighting its links to the aboriginal, French, British eras of local history. Carl then led the group in a review of the current Parks’ strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis).

Following a brief coffee break, Carl re-assembled the group and divided it into four working groups. Each group was asked to use base plans, photos and markers to prepare an assessment of the current park (i.e. what works and what doesn't) and to suggest some options for future improvements. Each group elected a representative to report back to the whole. Following these presentations, Carl thanked everyone and summarized the next steps in the study process. A second workshop devoted to planning future improvements will be scheduled for a mutually convenient time in the next six to eight weeks. The workshop ended at approximately 9:45.

The following minutes are compiled from notes taken by Carl Bray, Kris Hebert and Advisory Group members.

### *Strengths*

- Waterfront path
- Site itself: accessible, free of charge, on waterfront,
- Site natural beauty-tree/waterfront
- Municipal ownership
- Views
- Proximity to city centre
- On bus route
- Relatively undeveloped
- Trees/vegetation in relatively good condition
- Well-used
- Of historic importance
- Large size/diverse uses
- Of cultural significance
- Good parking
- Ties to Kingston military and cultural origins
- Venue for fireworks
- Lends itself to diverse, year-round use
- Diverse micro-climate
- Camping brought economic benefits to Kingston
- Park safe for families and pets
- Mature natural setting
- Can accommodate large community events
- Has good combination of open space and enclosed woods
- Archaeological remnants (e.g. old stone footings) still evident
- Waterfall
- “eyes on park” from adjacent condo towers provide safety
- Borders publicly-owned land
- Proximity to Rideau Trail, Conservation Authority and major arterial road
- Sports venue for universities and college
- Ceremonial site
- Viewing spot for offshore sailing events
- Natural area in an urban core
- Fresh air/shade
- Good potential for swimming
- Constant cooling breeze

- Park is a cultural heritage landscape (designed and evolved)
- Picnic spot for all/large groups
- Offers waterfront access for older/disabled people

#### *Weaknesses*

- Neglected
- Current hiatus in City's activities there creates uncertainty and worries about the future of the Park
- Poor/non-existent swimming
- Lack of washrooms (especially opening times)
- Unsafe conditions (e.g. dead fish and birds left on ground)
- Older trees vulnerable to decay and damage from elements/ no replanting
- Lack of timely maintenance
- Vandalism
- Under-utilized compared to levels of activity in the past
- No on-site supervision (i.e. live-in Park manager)
- Uncertain fit with City's overall plans for Kingston's waterfront

#### *Opportunities*

- Potential integration with emerging City plan for 'Kingston's Waterfront Strategy
- Diversity offers many revitalization options
- Adjacent public lands (i.e. co-ordinated planning and development)
- Waterfront Regeneration Trust initiative (trail improvements and signage)
- Eco-tourism
- Programming, camping giving economic spin-offs as well as on-site revenue generation
- Partnerships
- Re-instatement of events previously held there (e.g. dog show)
- Programmatic and functional links with St. Lawrence College (e.g. student course, parking, residences)
- Inclusion of native community within larger community
- Interpretive centre
- Donated elements (e.g. benches)
- Use of main building for variety of events (e.g. fundraising)
- Cultural events (e.g. music, theatre)
- Therapeutic environment
- 4 season place
- Perfect for cultural gatherings (e.g. Pow-wows)
- Alternative venue or expansion space for events now held in downtown core
- 'Theatre' in the park
- Picnic and open space for new Canadians (i.e. a large, safe, free, accessible public open space)

#### *Threats*

- Commercial/residential development
- Uncertainty
- Angry old women who walk dogs (!)
- Potential wind turbine

- Pressure on individual Council members to make decisions that are contrary to public wishes
- Over-emphasis on downtown Kingston
- Mis-information
- Cost of improvements
- liability
- Hasty, piecemeal decision making
- Low priority for City

The following are comments recorded from the four small-group sessions.

*Group 1 (Robin Etherington presenting)*

What works:

(see Strengths, above)

What doesn't work:

- Playground underused
- Paving on roads and parking lots
- Disrepair of beach bulkhead
- Poor tree condition
- Poor washroom condition and opening times
- Closed change rooms and beach
- Disconnected walkways within park
- Workshop building
- Eroded wildlife habitat
- Supervision inconsistent
- Boat ramp: access road and condition

Ideas for the future:

- More benches and garbage cans
- Improve picnic area, add picnic shelter and bandshell
- Partnerships with professional campground operators
- Restaurant/food service
- Improved supervision, safety phones (as at Queen's)
- Upgrade Elevator Bay Park-integrate with Lake Ontario Park
- Tree planting
- Landscape King Street frontage, improve interface with neighbouring properties
- Short-term docking, improved boat ramp, better links to campground
- Enhance wildlife habitat

*Group 2 (Mark Fluhrer presenting)*

What works:

- Park as a whole generally OK
- Beach and flat rock swimming areas used to work, as did events programming and camping
- Quietness, shade, breeze
- Large open area in north part of Park

What doesn't work:

- Barrier fence with PCC lands
- Waterfront natural areas

- Trees in poor condition, no replanting
- Walkways disconnected
- 4 season use difficult
- Aboriginal links under-developed

Ideas for the future:

- Include Richardson Dock Park in LOP planning
- Reforestation plan
- Winter uses: outdoor skating rink, cross-country ski trails
- Widen paths to allow shared right-of-way, connect them
- Leave swamp in a natural condition
- Develop a Park theme – no Disneyland however – such as linking to St. Lawrence College (use of parking, residences, curriculum programming), interpretive centre
- Emphasize aboriginal links
- Improve lighting
- Clean up, fix up, don't make any hasty moves

*Group 3 (Alida Moffat presenting)*

What works:

- Stairways from former upper campground to lower campground
- Terraces down to beach
- Walkways –main ones are fine
- Parking: central and accessible
- Boat ramp-good to have one
- Events area to north
- Covered pavilion
- Walk along flat rocks

What doesn't work:

- Steep access road to boat ramp
- Steep access to beach areas for elderly-inaccessible
- Walkways and parking in poor condition
- Fence barrier to east abutting PCC lands
- Difficult walking conditions along shoreline in beach area
- King Street frontage: dangerous crossing, poor signage, no screening of road from Park
- Trail network-non-continuous
- Paved beach: bulkheads dangerous
- Trail link to east (PCC) too steep
- Picnicking not well organized
- Erosion of embankment near shoreline (east end)
- No swimming
- "totem pole" sign-not appropriate to first nations history
- Concrete fireplace in northern events/camping area
- Barren landscape of Elevator Bay Park
- Lack of benches

Ideas for the future:

- Rethink campground: if and where
- Improve pavilion-open it up
- Improve streetscape /open up entrance
- Improve beach and access

*Group 4 (Marc Letourneau presenting)*

What works:

- Walkways
- Camping
- Family uses (e.g. picnicking)
- Waterfront and lake views
- Diverse landscape
- Good conditions offshore for small boats
- Fences contain dogs [this wasn't our group's comment]
- Amusement park was fun for kids

What doesn't work:

- Degraded infrastructure/public facilities
- Quality of campground offering
- Waterfront access, lack of swimming
- Work shop building
- Remains of amusement park/ general concept of previous 'amusement park'
- Conflicting uses along walkways (e.g. pedestrians and cyclists)
- Current location of parking lot
- Barriers to adjacent properties
- Unfriendly signage
- Traffic at entrance

Ideas for the future:

- Access for light watercraft
- Fountain
- Merry-go-round
- Better camping
- Consider re-locating parking
- Interpretive centre
- Programming and events (especially for youth, such as BMX bike tracks, skating, skiing)
- Partnership with ORC
- Day camps

Please Note: The next workshop will be tentatively scheduled for **April 20<sup>th</sup>**. It will focus on opportunities and future uses for Lake Ontario Park derived from ideas and opportunities noted in the first workshop.