



Green Timbers Heritage Society

Annual General Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, November 9, 2016

ABC Fleetwood Restaurant | 15373 Fraser Highway, Surrey, BC

Call to Order

The Annual General Meeting of the Green Timbers Heritage Society was called to order at 7:10pm on November 9, 2016 at the Fleetwood ABC Restaurant by Don Schuetze.

Attendees

Tina Potma, Bill Potma, Robert Charron, Sandra Charron, Susan Lehman, Deanna Welters, Nathan Ross, Naomi Gladstone, Tomas Ulbrich, Liz Walker, Pat O'Connor, Travis Evans, Jason Craik, Tessa Perkins Deneault, Kasia Laskowska, Nathan Evans, Amar S. Virk, Don Schuetze, Hailey Ho, Brenda Martin, Jim Foulkes, Ellen Edwards, Grant Rice.

Welcome and Introductions

All attendees introduced themselves, including the 2015/16 Board of Directors (Don Schuetze, Susan Lehman, Deanna Welters, Ellen Edwards, Jim Foulkes, Tessa Perkins Deneault, Jason Craik, and Travis Evans) and students from Kwantlen Polytechnic University (Hailey Ho and Brenda Martin).

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was unanimously approved with the addition of an item for announcements. J. Craik moved to approve the agenda, seconded by T. Evans, and the motion was carried.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the previous AGM were unanimously approved as distributed. J. Craik moved to approve the minutes, seconded by S. Lehman, and the motion was carried.

Reports

1. Events

S. Lehman reported on the events of the past year. The Society had a booth at three community events: the Surrey Bend grand opening, Environmental Extravaganza at City Hall, and World Ocean's Day at Blackie Spit. Lehman described the effectiveness of talking to the public about the planned widening of Fraser Highway and showing them the shocking graphic of a plane landing on Fraser Highway.

2. Financial

Financial statements, prepared by N. Evans, are attached to these minutes. J. Foulkes reported on the balance of financial accounts: approximately \$3,500 in the day-to-day banking account and \$450 in the gaming account. He also reported on the gas tax rebate and GST rebate, and the SNAP account used to pay our SNAP employee. He also reported that there are a couple of current term deposits of \$3,000 and \$5,000.

It was suggested that the society look into making our SNAP employee unionized.

3. Membership

D. Schuetze reported that there are currently 71 paid members, but at one time the Society had over 800 members. Growing our membership should be a focus over the coming year.

4. Communications

D. Schuetze reported that communications relied heavily on email communications this year. The open-rate for our newsletters was between 25 and 35%, which is above the normal non-profit open-rate. However, this means that up to 75% of our recipients are not opening their emails, which suggests mail-outs should still be considered. We currently have 420 email subscribers.

Facebook was used more this year to share news items and calls to action. We have 170 “likes” on our page. A bit of experimenting with paid reach advertising bumped up views. The top post had over 6,400 people reached. A much more modest 150 views or so is more typical.

Unfortunately, time constraints prevented more timely work being done on the website (greentimbers.ca) itself.

Part of the educational activities was creating a site, savegreentimbers.ca, specifically for raising awareness of the threats facing the forest. This has resources to help people educate them themselves about the issues, and provide fodder for letter-writing or other activities.

Discussion:

- Who can sign our petition? Perhaps we should be reaching out to a wider audience
- P. O’Connor mentioned that Green Timbers is described as a ‘downtown park’ by the City of Surrey and that downtown Surrey is considered the second downtown of the Metro Vancouver region.
- D. Welters wonders why Surrey is part of the GVRD, and why not the FVRD? This configuration may be more beneficial to our city.
- Perhaps we should be in favour of transit expansion but opposed to widening of roads

- Savegreentimbers.ca is an activist site for our petition and resources
- P. O'Connor mentioned that Village Surrey could rebroadcast our announcement to a wider audience, and there are many other groups we could ally with.

5. Activities

D. Schuetze reported that both members and non-members have been engaging in activism. We have a petition on change.org with 772 signatures, and a more general paper version of the petition with many signatures as well. A presentation was made to City Council, flyers were delivered door to door and put on windshields, posters were distributed, signs were posted, and banners were hung. One member could even be seen walking around the forest wearing a placard. Linda Prai performed two well received 'stealth concerts' in the park. Many letters to the editor were written expressing concern over the widening of Fraser Highway and the rezoning of the two properties on Green Timbers Way, and there was a great deal of media attention given to these activities.

6. SNAP Report

N. Ross gave a very thorough summary of the SNAP program's activities over the past year and his plans for the coming year. A copy of the report is attached to these minutes.

7. President's Report

D. Schuetze shared his president's message:

We knew it was going to be an interesting year. After our last AGM we were still smarting from the City installing a traffic light at 144th and Fraser Highway, despite years of discussion over closing that part of the road. We were still in shock from plans to widen Fraser Highway, and perhaps feeling a little tainted by our involvement in the consultation leading up that plan.

But who would have guessed? In 2016 the City also made public plans to widen 100th Avenue to four lanes and after sitting on a pair of vacant properties on Green Timbers Way for a few years decided to rezone them for comprehensive development.

I hate to break it to you, but Green Timbers as a natural asset is in the way of development. It's a barrier to getting to Guildford or Clayton. It's an obstruction to striking deals with the provincial government for housing money. It's just not providing those much-needed revenues or services to the City.

Or so it seems. Despite my jaded view of what seems like myopic planning there are a few signs this isn't the complete situation. The City has reached out to our society for input for both Fraser Highway and 100th Avenue. For 100th Avenue the project manager pushed engineering to narrow the standard roadway width, counted the trees and people crossing the road and developed a plan that would not involve cutting down any of the forest planted in the 1930s. We've had discussions about making sure water flows properly from the north to the south, reducing noise levels with a special asphalt, etc etc.

Another example: the two properties on Green Timbers Way were never protected, as the Mayor and Councillors are quick to remind anyone. They were part of the original Green Timbers Square Mile, however, and as a result we do have an attachment to them. The City's plans for them, however odious I feel the development to be, do include rehabilitating the stream that runs through there and setting aside significant trees for protection.

So it's not all bad. But is it enough? Is it enough for the City to listen to concerns and mitigate against harm? I think this is the key word: mitigate.

We mitigate when we know we are doing harm, and doing harm is what we are doing. It doesn't matter how well-thought-out the road widening or development is -- the forest, and with it the park and the ability for us as citizens to have quiet enjoyment of our natural heritage -- is threatened. I won't preach to you, the choir, about why. We're all here because we share a similar outlook.

However, all these mitigations obscure what in my mind are the real problems: a lack of vision for a park of stature right next to the downtown area, no planning for this natural area as a whole, and a transportation policy that ignores the spaces it cuts through.

These are complex issues. They're hard to explain. They don't reduce down to easily digestible sound bites. My son, seeing some of the posters around had one comment: "too many words."

And so, here we are with at least four threats to the long-term viability of this as a natural area, and perhaps a few more on the horizon. Will we be mitigated into having a patchwork of isolated fragments of forest? Who can help educate the City and the public there's more at stake here than reducing -- maybe -- our commute time to Cloverdale by 30 seconds?

Well, it has to be us. Our Society, over 30 years old, is struggling. Our membership, once over 800 is now less than 100. The tasks of just running the society are spread over only a few people, people who are busy with their lives, people who have other concerns and other things that need to be taken care of.

It's discouraging to look at the long list of tasks to be done, but this last year has been an eye-opener for me. Several people have contacted me looking for how they can help. People, some not even members of our Society, have taken the initiative to educate the public about the threats to Green Timbers, whether through gathering signatures, delivering flyers, walking with placards, writing letters, spreading social media posts, and even creating concerts in the park. It's been something to watch: citizen-involvement. And we need more of it.

I can't do this by myself. Neither can you. Maybe Bill can. But if enough people can chip away at a task or two, or maybe three, maybe then we can get city managers and our elected officials looking at alternatives to mitigation.

That's my plea for everyone to get more involved.

Discussion:

- D. Welters mentioned that we need to rally together and strategize, similar to how Bear Creek Park was saved from 84th avenue going through the park.
- G. Rice said the whole city should be involved, not just the neighbourhoods around the forest.

New BC Societies Act

N. Evans reported on the new BC Societies Act and the transition package for the GTHS. The new bylaws have very few changes. After November 28, 2016, the Society has 24 months to transition to the new bylaws and they must be approved with a 2/3 vote at an AGM. New to the bylaws: no proxy votes, no paid directors, some new financial requirements.

Election of Directors

Eight directors were elected to the 2016/17 board:

- Don Schuetze
- Jim Foulkes
- Tessa Perkins Deneault
- Susan Lehman
- Deanna Welters
- Ellen Edwards
- Bill Potma
- Amar Virk

E. Edwards moved to accept these nominees by acclamation, seconded by J. Craik, and the motion was carried. Roles for the directors will be decided at their first meeting in December 2016.

Announcements

- Sunnyside Acres tree planting at 10am on November 19th and Friends of Hazelmere on Nov. 13
- Surrey Stories – GTHS contributes a page to this publication twice annually, and E. Edwards shared a poem she wrote to be included: “It’s Winter in Green Timbers”. It is attached to these minutes. It was suggested that she submit the poem as a letter to the editor.

Adjournment

The 2016 AGM of the Green Timbers Heritage Society was adjourned at 9:00pm by D. Schuetze. The next meeting of the GTHS Board of Directors will be held December 7, 2016.

Minutes submitted by: Tessa Perkins Deneault

Attachments:

- **SNAP Program Annual Report, prepared by N. Ross**

Surrey’s Natural Areas Partnership (SNAP) – 2016 Season

Founded back in 2001, Surrey's Natural Areas Partnership (SNAP) is a unique collaboration between the City of Surrey Parks Division, the Green Timbers Heritage Society, the Sunnyside Acres Heritage Society and the White Rock Surrey Naturalists. Each year these partner groups employ secondary and post-secondary students to restore and enhance natural areas while promoting environmental stewardship in Surrey's parks. As a founding member and the chief administrator of the SNAP program, Green Timbers Heritage Society plays a critical role in maintaining this unique partnership.

The SNAP students are divided into two teams to best reach our objectives: a Habitat Restoration team and an Environmental Outreach team. The Habitat Restoration team works towards improving the ecological integrity of our parks while our Environmental Outreach team reaches out to park users and local neighbourhoods inspiring nature appreciation and stewardship.

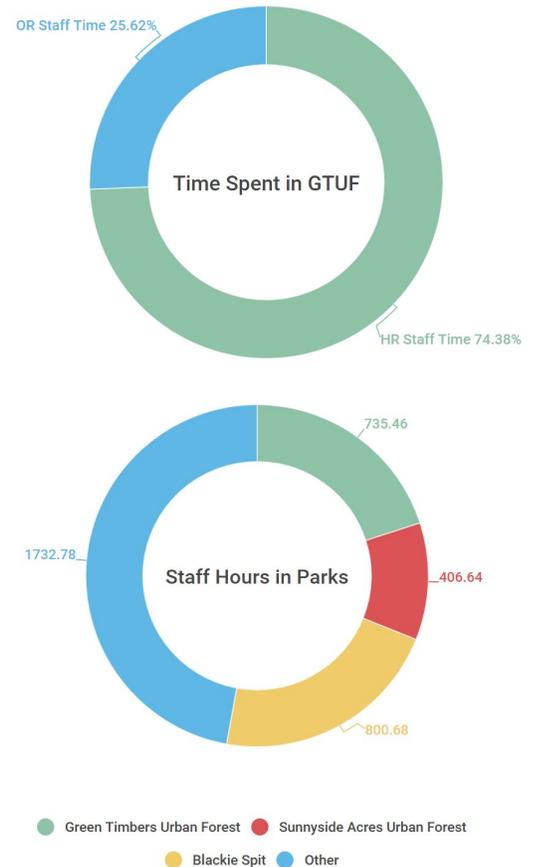
SNAP 2016

This past summer marked SNAP’s 16th year and with more students employed in the program than ever before, it was a flagship season for the program. Over the 4 months of the program, we had 15 students put in over 7,500 staff hours in our parks and neighbouring communities. Collectively, our teams were able to remove over 8,600m2 of invasive plants and garbage from natural areas and engage over 14,000 people across the city.

Special priority for work is given to the parks stewarded by our non-profit partner groups. This summer roughly 735 hours of SNAP staff time was spent in Green Timbers Urban Forest.

The majority of this time was put in by our Habitat Restoration teams which took on a variety of projects including invasive plant removals, lake shore clean ups, litter and refuse removals, decommissioning of unsanctioned trails, and the maintenance of the trail network, the unique meadow area and existing restoration sites. The Environmental Outreach team spent roughly 190 staff hours in Green Timbers engaging park users with information about the park’s history, park use bylaws and also facilitating on-the-fly interpretation. Three door-to-door canvassing projects were also taken on in the neighbouring communities to educate residents about proper yard waste disposal procedures. In total, our team reached roughly 1,200 people in Green Timbers alone.

Planning has already begun for the 2017 SNAP year so ideas and suggestions for the coming SNAP year are welcome and encouraged!



- **“It’s Winter in Green Timbers” poem, by E. Edwards**

It’s winter in Green Timbers,
It’s quiet here today.
The birds have stopped their chirping
And the squirrels have ceased their play.

The leaves have fallen from the trees,
The wind blows them aside.
But still I’m here a walkin’
Not a thing disturbs my stride.

The trail goes on and on ahead,
A very pleasant scene.
The trees ahead are tall and straight,
And always evergreen.

I’m thinking how it was before,
When I was just a lass,
Those trees were small, but higher,
Every time that we would pass!

My Dad was proud to see them,
Growing strong and tall,
As he had planted them some years before,
In summertime and fall.

The planters dug a little space
For every sapling tree,
Between stumps from the grand forest
That tourists came to see.

“Why stumps?” you ask,
“How could they saw majestic cedars,
Huge firs, and then hemlocks?”
They didn’t have the passion,
And lumber money talks.

So as I walk along the trail today,
Enjoying every tree,
My mind says, May they always stay,
“In perpetuity...”