



FOREST ADVISORY TEAM MINUTES

Monday, March 26, 2018 – 7:00 p.m.

55 Zina Street, Orangeville – Sutton Room (2nd Floor)

The Committee met at 55 Zina Street, Orangeville at 7:00 p.m.

Members Present: Warden Paul Mills (Chair)
Tanya Boniakowski (Public Member) (by teleconference)
Andy Kennedy (Public Member)
Lisa Needham (Public Member)
Heather Pady (Public Member)
John Thomson (Public Member)

Staff Present: Scott Burns, Director of Public Works/County Engineer
Caroline Mach, County Forest Manager
Rebecca Whelan, Information Management Coordinator

Chair Mills called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Declarations of Pecuniary Interest by Members – None

1. **FOREST ADVISORY TEAM – March 26, 2018 – ITEM #1**
Introductions

Chair Mills welcomed everyone to the inaugural meeting of the Forest Advisory Team. Scott Burns, Director of Public Works/County Engineer, explained that the management of the County Forest now falls under the umbrella of Public Works.

The members of the Committee introduced themselves and explained their interest in serving on the Forest Advisory Team.

2. **FOREST ADVISORY TEAM – March 26, 2018 – ITEM #2**
Dufferin County Forest Advisory Team Mandate

The Committee reviewed its mandate and the Terms of Reference as outlined in the Recreational Use Policy. Chair Mills stated that the overall goal of the Committee is to protect the quality and integrity of the forest ecosystem while also providing social and economic benefits to the public. The Committee will function as a think tank and each committee member is encouraged to share feedback and provide input in order to assist staff with the management of the forest.

3. FOREST ADVISORY TEAM – March 26, 2018 – ITEM #3
Thomson Tract Land Use Class

Caroline Mach, County Forest Manager, stated that the County recently received a donation of 29.58 acres of property, to be called the Thomson Tract, adjacent to the south of the Little Tract (west side of Airport Road, about 15 km north of Highway 89). Chair Mills thanked John Thomson for the donation.

Each forest tract is assigned a land use class designation in accordance with the Forest Management Plan. The land use classes are:

- Natural: these areas have a high conservation value and the only management activities would be for the maintenance of the notable features.
- Managed: these areas are managed as per regular practices
- Recreation: the focus of the area is for recreational use

She proposed that the Thomson Tract be classified as Managed Forest and that the permitted recreational used be the same as those for the adjacent Little Tract to minimize confusion and potential conflict.

The Committee discussed whether it was possible to extend the interpretive trail from the Little Tract to the Thomson Tract.

4. FOREST ADVISORY TEAM – March 26, 2018 – ITEM #4
Oak Wilt – Public Information Campaign

The Committee discussed Oak Wilt, an invasive disease which kills all species of oak trees. The disease is now about ½ km from the Canadian border, near Windsor. Infected oak trees can die in as little as 30 days. As oak is a prevalent species within the Dufferin County Forest, particularly in the Main Tract, there will be serious consequences should the disease spread.

Staff will be launching a public information campaign to have residents look for signs of the disease. The campaign will also remind residents not to move firewood, as this is one of the biggest ways of spreading disease to new areas.

5. FOREST ADVISORY TEAM – March 26, 2018 – ITEM #5
Ongoing Policy Implementation

Staff are continuing to implement the following items related to the Recreational Use Policy:

- a) Improved/increased signs at the Main Tract
- b) Implementation of property use agreements for trail maintenance
- c) Implementation of a permit process for use of the County Forest for events
- d) Increasing safety of forest users
- e) Best management practices for trail maintenance and marking

The committee members were invited to contact staff to provide their thoughts and feedback on these items. The intent is to develop an ongoing dialogue. The Committee was also invited to share their ideas for future discussions.

DISCUSSION

Staff provided an update on Emerald Ash Borer. Although it is established in the area, the impact will not be as significant as Oak Wilt since ash trees are not as prevalent within the County Forest. The federal government has implemented a biological control program to combat Emerald Ash Borer.

The Committee discussed signage within the forest, including the posting of the Recreational Use Policy. Staff stated that there are plans to install an information kiosk in the parking lot of the Main Tract within the next month.

There was a discussion on how the Committee would make recommendations for changes. Any recommendations from the Committee that require higher levels of approval will be presented to County Council through the Public Works Committee.

The Committee discussed the event permit process. Staff informed the Committee that they are currently working on making the permit process more user-friendly.

PUBLIC QUESTION PERIOD

Chair Mills opened the floor to questions from members of the public.

Ron Keeler thanked staff for answering the questions he had sent.

Margo Young asked if the answers to these questions would be shared with the public on the website, as she felt they were pertinent to all the user groups. She asked if there was a way that members of the public could receive communications regarding the forest on a regular basis. She also expressed concerns regarding the makeup of the Committee as there had been no mention of equestrian interests during the introductions. Chair Mills stated that the Committee is not meant to be strictly a recreational group and that the Committee is happy to take comments from the public.

Ron Keeler suggested that staff use steel posts for signage instead of putting the signs on trees.

Carolyn Milne suggested that the County look into developing an app for identifying and reporting Oak Wilt. The Committee discussed other options for public awareness campaigns including making school visits. Staff will have an education plan prepared for the April Home and Garden Show.

There was a discussion regarding the event permit process, including the fees. All scheduled events will be posted on the County website and at the new kiosk at the Main

Tract. For events at tracts other than the Main Tract, signs will be posted as in the past. Alternative methods for posting this information were discussed.

Sandra Kendall inquired about the process for sharing information with the Committee. Staff responded that while not every piece of correspondence would be forwarded to the Committee, any issue that required their input would be included on the meeting agenda.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:46 p.m.

Next Meeting: To be determined
55 Zina Street, Orangeville – Sutton Room

Respectfully submitted,

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Warden Paul Mills, Chair
Forest Advisory Team