



## **Belle Park Ideas – Focus Group**

**Dates: August 18<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – City Hall**

- The purpose of the targeted focus group session was to provide survey findings to a mix of key stakeholder's to gather input.
- 9 people attended with the addition of 4 city staff:
  - Mary Farrar – Friends of Inner Harbour
  - Paul Carl – Member of the Indigenous Community
  - Frank Dixon – Golfer/Member of Belle Park Working Group
  - Mary Louise Adams – Member of Belle Park Working Group
  - John Clark – Member of Kingston Panthers Rugby Football Club
  - Anne Macphail – Public Health, Active Transportation
  - Eleanor Macdonald – Organized a petition to keep Belle Park wild
  - David Bussiere – Kingston Pickle Ball Club
  - Anne Lougheed – Member of North Kingstown Secondary Plan Working Group
- The group were given background information on the public consultation process and how the survey was created, structured and advertised.
- The survey results were then shared with the group
- Survey highlights were discussed as for their merits and potential impacts
- The group was informed that as a next step, staff would be holding a public recap session on August 22<sup>nd</sup> at the Invista Centre. After that staff would work with the Belle Park Working Group on recommendations, targeting a report for the late September Council session.

## **What we heard:**

- Site is complicated, can't put condos. Needs to be made clear at sessions that the site is a former landfill.
- Walking trails – is there a connection to Belle Island? No trails wanted towards Belle Island – not a primary pathway.
- Pathways leading to Belle Island would need to be done in consultation with the Indigenous Community.
- In the comments people were clear that they wanted better trails and not access to Belle Island.
- Belle Park is not a site that is good for dual boat launch due to contamination/UNESCO.
- Recreation is very broad and could also include hiking, biking, and walking, cross country skiing. Important whether half of the recreation activities include naturalization means those who want it know the difference. Enhanced shoreline & walk trails are similar.
- Verbiage on survey was built from the wording that was given in the public sessions.
- Hiking & walking fit with naturalization.
- Is the money we put in the golf course representative of how people use the park?
- \$125,000 was the number that Commissioner Lanie Hurdle provided to council in 2014 of what it would cost to maintain park space only.
- A lot of family oriented activities.
- Thought should be given to the highest scored options vs. options that don't cost money.
- A large cohort of the public would like to see the park turned into something that be used by more people.

- People are already using the park for hiking, walking, biking etc.
- Impacts/Outcomes/Opportunities Golf:
- Environmental realities – closed landfill there is waste immediately below the surface under a thin layer of top soil. There are risks with settlement. Always maintained underground wells. There are thousands of trees planted on the site – these realities will not change despite what is decided.
- Many people who signed the letters saw the wilderness as is with the golf course. It is affordable, used by a wide population. Before they signed the letter they checked to see if golfers were included as they want to be seen as negative to the golfers.
- Golf is 4-6 months of the year. Golfers are still using the park for recreation. Golfers are a source of revenue. Maybe a scale down to allow for other things. Still enjoying the park with golf there.
- 68% of all respondents (742 respondents) chose “no golf at all”, they can’t be ignored
- Golfers who are paying green fees or memberships are the only ones paying to use the park. Walking, pickle ball are free. Space is an informal dog park. Not advertised as such. Dog walkers watch out for golfers. There are a number of dog parks in the city that are designated as such. Golfers meeting non-golfers with dogs. Making it a formal dog park, large open space, not crowded. Benefit of open space for dog park without leashes.
- Who are the people that use the park? People who use golf course are not the people who use it for recreational activities.
- Options for civic golf course? Are there other city lands to be used for golf?
- Yes, possible but would have to give something else up. Maybe Grass Creek Park.
- Par 3 golf course 18 holes not right in the City. There is one in Westbrook. Land is level on a former marsh the only hilly part is where the range is. Accessible for those who want to walk lightly, no big hills – user friendly designed by someone

in the Sports Hall of Fame. Inexperienced golfers slice right – experience golfers slice left. This course is perfect for the inexperienced golfer. They like it because it's easier they don't lose balls.

- What do the golfers want? If going to close the course keep the range open.
- If the course stayed in some form would the driving range support the cost of running the course?
- What are the implications if golf is removed? Would staff still be present and maintaining it? Would it turn into tent city like the Tannery site with people squatting? – This would need to be addressed and the site monitored.
- Frisbee golf be applicable? Yes – Frisbee golf not a lot of maintenance costs. Noxious weeds would still need to be cleared.
- Think who would use it? Frisbee golf might be there but the people who use golf aren't using the park for Frisbee. Golf is a widely played sport but has a class distinction. City course is priced low enough for everyone to enjoy. The users are not yoga people. They need a softer sport.
- Other sports at this time aren't providing funding but if other sports are included these sports would contribute financially.
- Could work at Belle Park as close to clubhouse & parking the design is efficient.
- North King's Town comments allow more walkable access for everyone. Environmentally friendly. Golfers need to be told more people including young people take up the sport. Golfers should have the say on whether or not golf is eliminated.
- Change in way the government manages water levels don't know the new water levels. Golf could be made better. Real issue is the standard of the cutting of the fairways. Land is tilted & machines can't cut properly. Lose your ball in fairway. Standard of cutting has gone down. Cost of keeping the machines there & staff.
- If this year was not a significant weather event can a certain amount of golf be maintained if weather continues like this year?
- There is an area that can be used but there will be a cost.

- Impacts/Outcomes/Opportunities Naturalization:
- Options #2 & 3 come out of the discussion that the working group had. Protected shoreline opportunity for the city to have access. Not every waterline needs to be public access. Edges are wild, natural – leave as wild as possible. We are losing the opportunity of offering this. Involved with turtles & wildlife. Has a map of wildlife areas.
- Don't think kayakers should be able to have access. Should be sections that should be saved. Important to map where the turtles are. Keep natural. Major road and public works access road half way between the big road and the water is a lovely area. Proposed a new site for the course. The road was built for environmental access – learned a lot about this topic and understand the advantages of the site. Advantage for possible intersecting access for the future. 1 km to City Hall, piece of nature in an urban setting.
- People could walk from golf course. A sign that indicates a separate site. This is marshland H&S issue as people could fall in.
- NKT visioning report results of the public consultation these results are consistent with those public sentiments of Belle Park re: walking trails, habitat – potential between recreational opportunities, come up often that people want naturalization walking trails same results we're seeing at NKT.
- Habitat for wild life that is wild – how will wildlife have access? Allow for a corridor for wildlife to get to the wild or naturalized part of the park.
- A dog park can be detrimental to wild life for dogs & animals. People need access to wild spaces accessible by public transportation. Many people don't know it's an urban wilderness. Letting people know it's there is minimal cost.
- Not just a habitat for humans. A lot of species are in there. Ecological concerns – consider the space for urban wilderness. This means pollinator species and wild flowers. This is popular in British cities as they have grown wildflowers and meadows within their cities.

- 13 ecological principles. Enter urban biophilic cities movement. Wilderness within 3km of downtown. Urban wilderness will be part of a movement. Think of what we are leaving behind for future generations. Leaving it as a heritage space.
- Does the City have a biodiversity policy?
- No, but biodiversity is referenced in some form in the sustainable Kingston plan. Staff would need to check the wording related to biodiversity.
- Unease of words. What is meant by wild? Are you putting down concrete to preserve the shoreline?
- Is there going to be a story of the history of the dump? Without the dump Belle Park is a waterway.
- Is there a way to have the knowledge or interconnection known so when people are walking on one trail they are seeing how the trail is connected to nature.
- Impacts/Outcomes/Opportunities Outdoor Recreational Activities:
- Biking trails & pump track. Pump track is a small earth track with bumps similar to mountain biking.
- Golf course is nice for cross country skiing.
- At one time the clubhouse was run all year round and you could rent skis and there was tobogganing on the hill.
- There are 3 panels around the site that describe the dump, the errors and what it currently is.
- In favour of field sports if the grounds can be made level.
- Something put down to level the field – rugby & all sports are struggling for field space. Belle Park is unique because there are no sports fields there. Adding sports fields will allow to bring more people in, brings in younger population, Sports & the ability to run camps which incorporate understanding nature, basketball camp, pickle ball camp and to help kids & adults learn the history and get some outdoor activity.

- Couldn't widen the space due to contamination. Would digging into the ground to improve conditions for biking and sports field be permitted? It's mostly a cost issue. Can be built up. Overall wild space. What is the impact of more people doing to the wild space?
- If the park is improved more people will show up to use it. Why can't it just be left as is?
- There is a footprint for recreation on the site now but would need to be rehabilitated. Combined with some other kind of green space. Remarkable to see what happens when it's left alone. Leave the service roads.
- Comparison to Lesley Spit in Toronto – Leslie Spit is worth looking into as it was to be developed but a working group made up of local residents didn't want it to be urbanized.
- Biking, hiking, canoeing, walking, kayaking fits in with vision of park as a naturalized space. Two different version of recreation. Some can be not as developed.
- The feasibility of putting a sports field on the landfill is this safe for children? Would a turf field be put in?
- The landfill we can cover up easier than pull out. Turf field would be more ideal in terms of the need to not having to water. Putting a sports field is safer. Belle Park was deemed safe to use as parkland.
- There is a watering restriction that is used for risk reduction. The more water that goes in causes more harm as the leachate drains out into the water.
- Belle Park did have a BMX & skate board park there to the north of the courts at one time. There is one big trail from the top of the hill down to the water with a wonderful view. The corridors of the course were changed. There is a need for a large space for sports fields but the area isn't large enough because of the trees that have been planted.
- The clubhouse improvements – keep it open all season and offer coffee and drinks in the winter.

- Staff would have to work through the logistics and whether the clubhouse would be the clubs responsibility to staff or the city.
- Totem pole put there by the inmates of Collins Bay. Totem poles are not meant to be repaired and if anything was done you would need to work with the indigenous community. Building an indigenous community centre is not up to the working group or focus group. There would need to be consultation with the indigenous community and because a report must go to council in September there is no time for this consultation.
- Lots of people use the park now without any added amenities. They don't need more amenities.
- But would more people use the site if there were more/different amenities?
- The K&P trail opened earlier this year with maps. Can something like that be added to include Belle Park on the map?
- Showers would be nice when coming off the course on hot days.
- Don't care what happens in central area but the trees are to be left alone. It is hard to monetize the benefits of trees & a natural shoreline. Hugely important to maintain the property and not think about the financial aspects.
- Sports field will enhance and allow showers for all – helps people enjoy the park more.
- Wide variety of animal & bird species around. When site was reformed Doug Fluhrer put a lot of thought into the tree species. Can't measure the value in terms of unique space in Kingston and in eastern Ontario. More can be done.
- Everyone is represented fairly within the city. Pickle ball is already being played and it is the fastest growing sport in North America. It improves the quality of life and has rules that accommodate all people.
- No matter what is there it gets someone outside. Be it sports fields or kept wild. Golfers get a bad reputation. Citizens need to step up and the City needs to realize that there is a cost for happy & healthy citizens.



- Whatever happens at Belle Park relates to Belle Island and make sure it is compatible.
- Everyone uses that space as it is accessible by public transit. Be sure that animal habitats are left alone.
- 2 different lines. One there is an incredible opportunity to fulfill moral obligations to biodiversity. There is also the opportunity for golf and golf access.
- There is physical evidence that more people who are exposed to natural wild life and exposed to nature are healthier.
- There is connectivity and being able to get there easily either by walking, biking or public transit.
- Tie it in with the Active Transportation Master Plan way finding and the connection to K&P trail. West Nile virus and Lyme disease are still issues.