

Sentiers Wakefield Trails

Draft Minutes Annual General Meeting

Saturday, April 13, 2019

1:00 – 2:30 PM

Wakefield Community Centre

Present:

Board: Ken Bouchard, Patrick Boily, Rick Muise, Irene Richardson, David Pritchard, Dave Bradley, Karen Bays, Rolf Wesche, Maurus Moore, Tom Reid , Kathy Hewlett Jobes (**Absent:**, Bob Gibson)

Members: approx. 20 members also participated

- 1. Welcome of Attendees:** Ken Bouchard
- 2. Adoption of Agenda:** moved by Maurus Moore , seconded by Rolf Wesche - carried unanimously
- 3. Adoption of Minutes of previous AGM:** These were shared in hard copy to those present and will also be on our website. Rick Muise moved to adopt the Minutes. Seconded by David Pritchard - carried unanimously
- 4. Treasurer's Report:** This report was shared in hard copy to those present and will also be posted on our website. Patrick Boily explained the figures in detail, highlighting that during 2018 expenses exceeded revenues due to circumstances beyond SWT's control. In particular, the impacts of the flooding late 2017 meant extensive remedial action had to be done in 2018 that had not been part of the planned budget. This, coupled with a serious reduction in municipal funding (from a requested \$20,000 to \$15,000) meant that expenses exceeded revenues for the year. Given that funds from the municipality have once again been cut even further, there is an urgent need to identify new funding modalities. Several present requested more information about how donations made through SWT's agreement with the TransCanada Trail were recorded. It was explained that these donations would only appear in our books once expenses were actually made against the funds held for our account at TCT. This is why donations that individuals made to TCT for SWT's account that were done during 2018 do not appear in the 2018 books. Several present also expressed concern about the impacts of the reductions in the overall funding levels. President Bouchard indicated that he would address this in more detail during his report. Members expressed support for an idea that was advanced regarding the potential use of crowd sourcing, and proposed that a link could appear on the SWT website. SWT undertook to explore this possibility. Rolf Wesche moved to adopt the Treasurers Report and Rick Musie seconded. Motion adopted unanimously.
- 5. Trail Usage –** During 2018 SWT, thanks for a special grant from the Woods Logue foundation, SWT was able to purchase trail counters. Rick Muise described how these work and shared the statistical results. These counters were purchased and installed in the fall and therefore did not capture the heavier summer trail usage. However, despite that, the counters clearly demonstrate significant and regular usage. He noted some of challenges in correctly placing the counters in order to avoid over or under counting and welcomed ideas for improving our data collection particularly with respect to placement. He also noted the need for additional counters if SWT is to obtain an overall figure for the full trail network. The analysis to date has been shared on our website and it will be updated as new data is obtained. Several present highlighted that the trails were a very cost effective means of achieving recreational objectives for the municipality and that this point needed to be made regularly to elected representatives.

6. President's Report: Ken presented his report of last year's activities by stressing two overarching themes. Firstly, trails need to be recognized as a kind of living entity. As an element of nature they change constantly and must be regularly maintained in order to ensure functionality and safety. It is not a matter of build and leave alone. Our insurance stipulates that trails must meet safety standards or they will need to be closed.

Secondly, it is important to note that while over the past six years we have received good support from the Municipal Council with grants between \$15,000 and \$25,000, at present there doesn't seem to be an ongoing sense of ownership for the trail system. The budget request for 2018 was reduced by over 25% while for this year it was drastically reduced by 60%. While we all know about the hard choices that must be made for public funds, these kind of reductions could indicate that Council does not view the trail system as an essential recreational and tourism resource that should be maintained by the community.

2018 Maintenance Operations: During 2018 the budget reduction from **\$22,500** to \$15,000 posed a major operational challenge as we were obliged to repair major damage caused by the flooding late 2017 or else our insurance would lapse and we would have to close trails. However, we were able to bring the trails up to the needed levels and did not need to do any closures. We also received support from the NCC when they provided the tree cutting services for the trails crossing their land to deal with those trees that had been diseased by the emerald borer infestation.

2018 Special Projects: We had also made important commitments to the RiverWalk project that we needed to honour. Fortunately through the auspices of the Trans Canada Trail (TCT), we received \$6200 from Keen Footwear for this project. This enabled an additional \$4000 from the MRC, \$4500 from the Gatineau Valley Historical Association and through the Federal Government student employment program we received \$1700. We also received \$1200 donated by the Covered Bridge Run. These funds then allowed us to develop the River Walk Heritage Plaque project and the TCT sign posts with a team involving Anita Rutledge, Linda Bardell, Alison Scott and Michael Kinghorn. In May our team of Student workers and volunteers installed all this material in time for the June 1st opening of the River Walk Project. We therefore met our commitments but this was achieved through this ad hoc last minute funding.

2018 strategic planning: Recognizing the need to place SWT on a more long term footing, a committee of SWT worked for a month developing a three year Long Term Strategic Plan. This was submitted in September requesting \$22,500 as we had for 2018. In January we were informed that we only received \$10,000 derailing all our planning for 2019.

2019 Opportunities lost: This drastic reduction in funding has spill on effects. Most funding sources are done on a matching basis with funders only providing half of costs. Without base funding, SWT cannot apply for other funds. As a result of a base operational budget that has now been cut to \$10,000 we have had to forego approx. \$30,000 in other funding. These include:

- Employment Quebec was willing to pay half the \$12,480 salary for an older worker we had lined up who would have been our foreman coordinating the work of our volunteers. The CLD had been willing to help with up to half of our share of this salary. However, with only \$10000 in funding to cover everything – including materials, we had to drop this application as we did not have the matching dollars.
- The Trans Canada Trail would have put us in touch with Goodfellow lumber one of their key sponsors in Quebec, to provide us an estimated \$4000 to \$6000 of lumber for the rebuilding of the turntable park. But again, we do not have the operational room to undertake even the essential trail maintenance for the coming year.

Volunteers: Members expressed the desire to assist SWT in coping with the challenges faced in 2019. Ken noted that one of the most important aspects for train maintenance is regular reporting on conditions, particularly if any problems are seen (such as dangerous trees, washouts, slippery conditions, or fallen rocks). He will also be posting calls for specific assistance with work projects.

Code of Ethics: The President also drew attention to our Code of Ethics which is posted on our website, inviting members for any comments or suggestions.

Members expressed appreciation for this comprehensive overview of the situation.

7. Election of Board Members: The President presented the proposed Board members for 2019, thanking retiring members Dayna Chicoine and Karen Bays and welcoming Rick Muise and John Pinkerton who have agreed to stand for the incoming Board. Ken also thanked our previous Treasurer Tom Reid for his many years of service, and welcomed Patrick Boily who has assumed this responsibility. He invited any interested members to stand for the Board. The proposed slate for the Board was unanimously approved. The Executive will be: Ken Bouchard President, Bob Gibson Vice President, Patrick Boily Treasurer, Kathy Hewlett-Jobes Secretary. Directors: David Bradley, David Pritchard, Irene Richardson, Rick Muise and John Pinkerton.

8. Meeting Adjourned at 2:30