

**Fort Williams Advisory Commission
Workshop Meeting Minutes
February 7, 2008**

Present: Chuck Wilson, Frank Butterworth, Maureen McCarthy, Tina Harnden, Greg Althauer, Dan Chase, Bill Nickerson.

Staff: Bob Malley

Residents attending:

Mylan and Maya Cohen
21 Surf Road

Sally Nason
1 Surf Road

Ed & Fran Minden
5 Surf Road

Jean and Jean-René
Goetze
Garden Circle

Called to Order 7:05 p.m. by Chuck Wilson.

1. General discussion with Surf Road Abutters:

Chuck Wilson welcomed the group and asked that each member of the Commission and each member of the residents group introduce themselves.

Chuck then opened by stating that the Town had received inquiries and letters over a period of time from some of the residents along the buffer of the Fort along Surf Road noting issues with the tree growth and invasive plants. He established that the Commission had called this meeting to hear and discuss the concerns of the residents. He then opened the floor to hear from the residents.

Maya Cohen opened. She stated that the residents of Surf Road were all good neighbors and felt they were good neighbors to the Fort. She discussed the amount of dense trees and undergrowth along their property. They have in the past ten years had a landscaping company come in and crown some of the trees, both on their property and the Town's property. She has recently had a company come back in and assess additional crowning in an effort to let more sunlight into their backyard so that they would be able to grow plants, which they have had difficulty doing. They were willing to pay out of pocket to do the tree work. The firm said they would need access to the Fort and that the Town

would need to be advised and agree. They merely want to thin and selectively trim the trees, not cut them down.

Mike McGovern stated that there has been benign neglect on that portion of the Fort. A few years ago a portion of the area was cleared. There were both good and bad reactions to the clearing. We asked you here tonight to know how everyone feels.

Mylan Cohen was happy it was cleared. He noted that there were many dead branches and mulching with garbage in the brush. He has cleaned it himself. He is concerned that it could also be a fire hazard. So they were very happy when it was cleared.

Fran Minden stated that she likes trees and animals. She stated that the bittersweet was very thick. She is very sensitive to mold and it is a health issue. She also stated there were trees with the tops that were dead and she is concerned that when it gets windy that they will break and fall and hit her house. She said some of the branches are even touching the ground. She feels this is not good for the trees either. She feels that if they are required to pay to have the trimming done it is like double taxation.

Ed Minden asked if we would approach an arborist to survey what is appropriate.

Chuck Wilson stated that he and Bob had walked the area with a Lucas Tree Co. arborist and they identified several problems that need to be managed. It is not just the larger trees but also the smaller trees, as well. There was not a specific discussion about crowning tress but thinning the growth over a period of time. We have a limited budget. No steps have been taken yet. Bob Malley said that they are ready to start some work when the weather permits.

Chuck reminded those present that the area in the park is a designated buffer. We need to have reasonable management and take care of the risk issues first. We do not want people walking away thinking that nothing will be done but what is done will be selective and subject to our budget constraints.

Maya Cohen stated that pruning is different than cutting down trees. She appreciates the buffer as she does not want to see everything that is going on over in the Fort.

Fran Minden reiterated again about the large branches leaning over her property. This is a light issue for her. She also discussed some branches have fallen on her property. She also mentioned that some of the trees were so dead that the raccoons were making homes in them.

Chuck stated again that three big trees were identified as being in need of trimming and would be taken care of in the near future.

Bob Malley discussed the logistics of doing some of the work.

Chuck Wilson asked the group of residents to confirm that their concerns were involving the cluster of trees right on the line of the fence. The group confirmed that this was correct.

Sally Nason stated she doesn't have an issue with the trees. She has mixed emotions on the bittersweet. It is out of control. She agreed to have some of trees taken down when they put the side walk along her property and now the bittersweet is much worse.

Fran Minden asked what the policy on poison ivy is.

Bob Malley indicated that there was no policy. That the Town really can't use chemicals on public property and that there is no real way to eliminate it.

Mike McGovern discussed how they had worked on it between the beach and the bunker.

Sally Nason asked why the other side of the Fort on the Delano Park side remains so clear and cleaned up. She doesn't want everything to be taken out, but she doesn't want it to be an eyesore.

Chuck Wilson stated that the other side has an active roadway that is totally accessible and abuts a large portion of the fence. Chapel Road is the only road even near the Surf Road fence line and the area has always been designated as a buffer and left relatively natural. He felt that would be the difference.

He again stated that there were plans to take care of some of the trees; however, it may not be to the level that they might like.

Mike McGovern stated that the Town wasn't sure what the citizens wanted and therefore, hadn't really spent money or time because of not knowing. So, there may be a need to reallocate some funds to work on the issue.

Frank Butterworth asked the group if the group present was representative. It was stated all but two families.

Maya Cohen asked about the security issue and Chuck Wilson stated that there have been issues with vandalism, people going in during, before and after hours of being open. The area is too large for a Police Officer to walk it alone at night. Ed Minden said that the fence was not stopping people from coming into the Fort. Fran Minden stated the Police were very responsive. General discussion occurred about the fencing being penetrated and having to be repaired. It was discussed that sometimes, like this evening, the gates remain open. Bob stated that it could be the renters coming in late, plowing and stated that there needs to be more consistency in closing and opening times.

Bill Nickerson asked if there might be merit for keeping the Fort open longer. Mike McGovern indicated that would cause a host of other problems if it was open longer.

Mylan Cohen asked what the Commission was envisioning for the Goddard Mansion. He feels it is dangerous and some one is going to get hurt.

Chuck Wilson stated we wouldn't spend a lot of money to preserve the mansion ruins and that is why we fenced it off, to make sure people weren't going in to the ruins. He bought up that we were going to hire an engineering firm to review options that might be different than just trying to preserve or rejuvenate it as there is limited historic significance to the mansion. Tina Harnden stated that we were not willing to spend tax dollars to deal with the Mansion. Maureen McCarthy stated that although there was no historic value to the mansion that there is significant emotional value to the Mansion for many people in the town and the area.

The consensus was that the Police were very responsive to calls regarding events in the Fort. Additionally, the consensus was people were concerned about light, danger of falling limbs and mold issues. They stated that they did not want to have an adversarial relationship. Chuck Wilson stated that we called the meeting to hear what they neighbors' thoughts and concerns are.

Chuck Wilson went on to state that private openings in the fence line are a concern. He understands there have been a number of openings for several years without town approval. He stated the Commission was not sure where they were going with this, but that it was going to be discussed. He thanked everyone for coming and their input.

2. Discussion of Security Issues

Chuck recommended that we move to the 3rd item on the agenda, the recommendations of the subcommittee for selection of the Consultant/Engineering firm. His reasoning was that the selection of the Consultant/Engineers is more urgent and the Discussion on Security Issues could continue at a later meeting. It was agreed by all present.

3. Recommendation of selection of Consultant/Engineers

Chuck stated that all five firms were interviewed and all were capable, had good presentations and were enthusiastic. He said that after all the interviews were completed that each of the members of the subcommittee had reached a conclusion separately that Renner/Woodworth was their choice. After discussions, they felt that this firm had the experience of working together for over twenty years. It was obvious that they had an excellent relationship amongst them selves. Also they had done very similar type projects to what we were looking at. Bob has checked references and they were outstanding and people stated that they would hire them again. No contract is necessary for the Town to utilize their services.

Greg made a motion and Dan seconded:

Motion to accept the subcommittee's recommendation and ask the Town Manager to enter into an agreement to provide design services with Renner/Woodworth.

Vote Unanimous

A general discussion occurred about how the Commission would work with the engineering firm while managing to control billable hours. It was agreed that the Selection Subcommittee would have an initial meeting to attempt to narrow the focus and report back to the full FWAC.

Meeting adjourned at 9:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Maureen McCarthy, Secretary