

**FORT WILLIAMS ADVISORY COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, MARCH 19, 2009**

Attendance: Dan Chase, Maureen McCarthy, Chuck Wilson, Bill Nickerson, Bill Brownell, Frank Butterworth

Absent: Greg Altnauer

Staff: Bob Malley

Guests: Mike McGovern, Town Manager
Jim Rowe, Town Councilor
Joe Edgar, Fort Williams Charitable Foundation

Meeting called to order at 6:47 p.m.

Dan welcomed Jim Rowe, Mike McGovern had not arrived at opening.

Approval of the February 12, 2009 meeting minutes:

Chuck moved to accept, Bill Brownell seconded. Unanimously approved.

Park Update:

Tree Warden met with Lucas to discuss tree work for the rest of this year. They started by focusing on the playground area. They then moved on to the Parade Field Oaks. The oaks need lots of work.

Sweeping is to begin very soon. The central lot is still closed although many people crash the snowdrifts and park there anyway.

Budget:

Ceremony requests are coming in about three a week. The meeting with the Finance Committee to submit the new budget request will be held on Monday, March 23, at 7:30 p.m.

Jim Rowe and Mike McGovern:

Mike began by stating that the Town Council has a goal to look at raising revenue to provide funding for the Fort. There has been a lot of chatter that times have changed with regards to feelings about entrance fees. Mike put in his Budget Message that the council might consider asking to make the Fort self-sufficient. General opinion is that the generated funds should stay in the park budget accounts, and not be used elsewhere in town. There will need to be dialogue between the Town Council and The Fort Williams

Advisory Commission.

The previous town-wide vote rejecting fees was 3,145 No – 1951 Yes.

We may need to explore whether we could do something with the rental properties beyond non-profit, educational, or cultural organization tenants.

Jim agreed with Mike McGovern's presentation. He said there is a reoccurring theme to have the Fort charge fees. He believes firmly that fees should be charged. Perhaps concessions, events, and other opportunities can be considered.

Commission comments ranged from:

Need to get some sustainability for the Fort.

Need to keep revenue from fees in the Fort accounts.

We need far more dollars than are presently available, or given, to do more within the Fort, as well as upkeep.

The topic arose that we may need to review grants that have previously been given and how charging fees may affect any stipulations that came with the grants.

Some exceptions to charging universal fees were discussed; free access for active military and veterans, and non-discrimination between residents and non-residents if we are self-sustaining from fees and taxpayers are no longer taxed to support Fort.

There are no legal issues with overriding the defeat of the previous fee referendum it is a political judgment that needs to be made by the Town Council.

Mike McGovern and Jim Rowe thanked us for our time.

Approval of the February 24, 2009 Goddard Mansion Workshop Minutes:

There was a discussion regarding content of the minutes with regard to costs, etc. Although the concerns were valid, the Commissioners present at the workshop did not discuss them at the time. It was decided that the meeting minutes would stand as an accurate reflection of the discussions that did take place.

Frank moved, Dan seconded and minutes were unanimously approved.

Discussion and vote on draft of Goddard Mansion Recommendations for Disposition of the Goddard Mansion.

Bob talked about the wording of the draft recommendations. He said it was a draft only and changes may be made. A few of the Commissioners suggested that we add items 1 through 6 from the Final Report from Renner/Woodworth to the Recommendation memo. We should add what we are going to do short-term. We also need to add in the estimated

cost for reducing the wall height and other recommendations.

It was moved to approve the Recommendation Letter with the changes discussed.

Maureen moved, Chuck seconded and was unanimously approved.

Funding Sources:

Bob will prepare a notebook with former data and regulations that we must adhere to meet the former grant stipulations/conditions.

Commission would like to have a new study on number of visitors, walkers. We would need to consider neighboring area and potential impact. Community Service does the scheduling of the Picnic Shelter, Bandstand and Gazebo. Bob handles all the commercial bookings.

Commission was wondering if there were companies that could assist in coming up with optimal rate for charging. Marketing company may be able to determine what would be best approach for charging. We were wondering what Two Lights State Park brings in during a given year. We were also wondering if this could be a phased approach start becoming self-sufficient, perhaps over two years so we could see what kind of revenue we will be potentially able to receive.

Request is going to be made to have Jean Gross, Headlight Gift Shop, and Janet from Community Service attend the next meeting, to discuss the numbers and how they impact our revenue stream.

It was suggested that we have a joint meeting with the Charitable Foundation to discuss what is being proposed.

Charitable Foundation Update:

They sent the check for \$9,000 to do hardscaping at the interpretive display. They are giving \$15K to the Arboretum Group this will cover a portion of the \$70K they need for initial phase. They also brought in \$27K on the annual drive.

Next Meeting: Moved to April 30 due to school vacation during regular week.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Maureen McCarthy
Acting Secretary