

MINUTES

Sibelius Square Working Group (SSWG) Meeting

Wednesday 3 May 2006

RSGC, 120 Howland Avenue

Patrick Kennedy (Chair, SSWG), Brenda Simon, Ginny Brett (SSWG), Tom Friedland (SSWG), Fred Freedman (SSWG), Margaret Lloyd, Robert Meynell, Jean Houston, Julia Dublin, Caroline Harvey (SSWG), Gillian Morton (SSWG), Mike Coleman (SSWG), James Cantor, Alan Shapiro, Bob Davies (SSWG), Jay Thiessen, Helen Kennedy (EA to Councillor Silva), Sandy Straw (Manager, Toronto & East York District Parks), Paul Martel (Chair, ARA Parks & Trees), Kristina Reinders (SSWG), George Pepper, Pierre Sullivan, Roger Horst, Erica, Ann Kerr, Erik Kerr, Jen Clark, Kyle Bichan, Nena Hardie (SSWG), Sarah Scott (SSWG)

1. **Minutes of the meeting of 10 April. Adopted.**
2. Result of the 7 March 2006 community meeting discussion of the need for turf restoration

The Chair noted that at the meeting of 10 April the SSWG had asked the City to carry the turf restoration as far as possible without incurring costs to the community.

3. Relationship of the SSWG to the ARA, the City, and the community. This item was on the agenda but not discussed.
4. Status of field work requested at last meeting

The western field has been roto-tilled but not seeded. Sandy Straw acknowledged that she has not been able to work within the timeline she had estimated. She agreed that sodding would be preferable to seeding, although the cost is higher. It would require at least three weeks of fencing. Sandy committed to initiate the Hydro stake-out, with a view to getting the greening started as quickly as possible. The SSWG has indicated that it is not willing to apply Section 37 funds to this project.

Motion (Sarah/Fred): that we give Sandy Straw encouragement to green the park this summer. Passed.

5. Planning the design process

Bob Davies described the City's standard process for design competitions, in which the City issues a Request for Proposals (RFPs), to which any properly qualified designer may respond. Sandy Straw advised that the City's practice

increasingly is to work with a community group committee, which might also include a design consultant of the group's choosing, to develop the design brief. The committee determines the design of the park and the City puts out an RFP for the technical drawings.

There was discussion of community input and the importance of creating a plan that will serve the community well for a long time, suitable for implementation in phases, which could be used as the focus for a substantial fundraising campaign. Sandy Straw confirmed that the City could establish a reserve fund to receive donations, and would issue tax receipts.

Motion (Tom/Mike): Bob Davies and Kristina Reinders should present at the next meeting a description, with timeline, of possible design processes, and recommendations on when to hire a designer. Passed.

6. All were invited in turn to propose concepts significant in the design of a successful park. Several themes arose:

Barriers: Many were against barriers in principle, because they interfere with the requirement of the park to serve many types of users at different times of day and year, and in different weathers, and the park is too small for further subdivisions to be functional or aesthetically satisfying. Others felt that areas of use could be demarcated by means such as plantings, low fences or changes in level. The present fence around the toddler playground functions well.

Use: The majority of opinion expressed was in favour of a flexible design that would serve multiple uses. Two people said that the park presently served a few uses well and could not reasonably be expected to serve more, even if some groups were dissatisfied. It was observed that with no separation between off-leash dogs and children, conditions favour the dogs. The use of the park by the elderly was also raised in this context. Solutions that permit both to use the park might include time-sharing, with hours varying with the seasons, or space-sharing or some combination. Several dog owners said they saw no conflict between their use of the park and that by other users.

There was recognition of the dog-owners' recent initiative to encourage clean-up and the turf damage caused by dogs. One suggestion was that off-leash use be limited during March & April and after heavy rain, just as Toronto Parks limits use of its fields by humans wearing cleats at those times. Ease of maintenance should be considered in park design.

The benefits of use by dogs was discussed: the social interaction of their owners; the fact that the presence of dogs and owners in the park at night and during the colder weather, when there are few other users, discourages undesirable use of the park; the benefit of having additional adults keeping an eye on neighbourhood children.

The rink and the playing field were mentioned as sections of the park that had been heavily used, by children and adults, until the last year or two, and many hoped that these uses could be restored. Fred explained that levelling of the area, proper drainage and construction of berms would permit rink flooding by local volunteers each winter without further assistance from City workers, which would increase the likelihood of having a rink.

Circulation and structures: Agreed that the paths across the park are well-placed. There were suggestions that the central flower bed could be replaced by something that would provide a stronger focal point and contribute to the park's social function, e.g. a covered structure and/or a seating area. Play structures for older children would be welcomed.

While some felt the washroom should be removed, Fred pointed out that it is essential to house the rink hoses and water connections in the winter. There was discussion of modifying it to serve refreshments, or to use as heated change rooms.

The location of the statue of Jean Sibelius, at the northern edge of the park, has historical significance. It was suggested that the quiet seating area around it be retained and developed.

7. Revisit arrangements during restoration of western field

This item was added at the request of Annex Dog Owners, some of whose members were dissatisfied with the previous agreement. Sandy Straw will need 2-3 weeks before any action is possible on greening the field, which permits further discussion of possible options. While the fencing plan approved on 10 April still stands, a motion was passed with a view to generating new proposals that have broad support.

Motion (Tom/Gillian): That the SSWG meet 3 weeks hence, with all groups having discussed possible solutions and prepared to work together in a conciliatory and constructive way. Passed.

The meeting ended at 9:10 pm.

8. The next meeting will be 24 May 2006.