

STAFF REPORT: Recreation Department



**REPORT TO: Infrastructure and Recreation
Committee**

MEETING DATE: March 24 , 2009

REPORT NO.: DOR 09 07

**SUBJECT: Nomination to the Niagara Escarpment
Parks and Open Space System Council**

**PREPARED BY: Shawn Everitt, Director of
Recreation**

A. Recommendations

THAT Council receive staff report DOR 09 07“Nomination to Niagara Escarpment Parks and Open Space System Council”

and that,

Shawn Everitt, Director of Recreation be selected as the Blue Mountains representative on the Niagara Escarpment Parks and Open Space System Council.

B. Background

The Town has received an invitation to have representation on the Niagara Escarpment Parks and Open Space System Council as a result of the review process for the Delphi Point Parks Management Plan in 2008.

The Blue Mountains Staff were asked to take part in round table discussions with stakeholders within the Niagara Escarpment Commission catchments area to review the existing Parks and Open Space review process. The purpose of these discussions is to develop a system to provide better communications and an overall understanding of land use within this catchment area. Through these discussions a Terms of Reference was created for the development of the Niagara Escarpment Parks and Open Space System Council.

Attachment 1 , provides a detailed description of the Niagara Escarpment Parks and Open Space System Council.

C. The Blue Mountains’ Strategic Plan

Preserving and enhancing natural and environmental features, and cultural heritage of the community

Providing a strong well managed municipal government

D. Environmental Impacts

Being involved and having membership on the Niagara Escarpment Parks and Open Space System Council will ensure that the Town has a strong voice on future policies, and protocols for use of Escarpment area lands and will also ensure appropriate uses of environmental sustainability are practiced.

E. Budget Impact

Staff Time and Travel for two full – day meetings a year in addition to an annual forum

F. Attached

- 1.) Niagara Escarpment Parks and Open Space System Council

Respectfully submitted,

Shawn Everitt, Director of Recreation

Signature

For more information, please contact:

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Terms of Reference

Niagara Escarpment Parks and Open Space System Council

February 2009

1. Name

The name of this organization will be the Niagara Escarpment Parks and Open Space System Council (NEPOSS Council). This name provides continuity with the Niagara Escarpment Parks and Open Space System (NEPOSS) and is representative of the agencies that manage parks and natural spaces within this system.

2. Purpose

The NEPOSS agencies are responsible for managing public land on the Niagara Escarpment and for developing and supporting NEPOSS initiatives and programs.

The NEPOSS Council is organized to advance the NEPOSS objectives identified in the Niagara Escarpment Plan. It was created in recognition of a need to foster dialogue on NEPOSS issues and improve liaison, shared resources, and coordinated action among various NEPOSS agencies.

The Council will provide advice to the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) and the Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC) on NEPOSS policies and programs and bring awareness to Council issues.

The Council will:

- Report and respond to the Ministry of Natural Resources as requested
- Provide effective leadership for coordinated park management and stewardship
- Protect natural and cultural heritage features
- Support the growth of NEPOSS through land securement initiatives
- Develop a centralized strategic marketing and communication process
- Build strong relationships with key stakeholders to address common park and open space issues and interests
- Work together to provide an interconnected system of trails and educational and recreational opportunities

3. Council Members:

The Council will be comprised of park and natural space agencies that are responsible for the management of public land in the Niagara Escarpment Parks and Open Space System, including the Bruce Trail. The Council should strive to maintain a membership that has strong geographic representation to ensure the diverse needs of the park agencies are met. MNR and NEC staff will be non-voting advisors.

Council:

- Bruce Trail Conservancy (2 member)
- Conservation Authorities (1 member per authority)
 - Credit Valley Conservation
 - Conservation Halton
 - Grey Sauble Conservation
 - Hamilton Region Conservation
 - Niagara Peninsula Conservation
 - Nottawasaga Valley Conservation
 - Toronto Region Conservation
- Country Heritage Experience Inc. (1 member)
- Municipalities/Cities (1 member per municipality/city)
 - City of Burlington
 - City of Hamilton
 - City of Owen Sound
 - County of Grey
 - Town of Blue Mountains
- Niagara Parks Commission (1 member)
- Ontario Heritage Trust (1 member)
- Ontario Parks (2 members)
- Parks Canada (1 member)
- Royal Botanical Gardens (1 member)
- St. Lawrence Seaway Authority (1 member)

Advisors:

- Ministry of Natural Resources (1 member)
- Niagara Escarpment Commission (1 member)

4. Membership

The MNR will initially invite the park and natural space agencies to submit names of persons to represent them as Council members. The MNR will convene the first meeting at which the Chair and Secretary will be selected. Members shall represent their park agency(s) for a two (2) year term; members may be reappointed. Members must be full time employees of a NEPOSS park or natural space agency and are knowledgeable of the NEPOS System and its operations. Upon the creation of a vacancy, the Chair will invite the agency to resubmit names for NEPOSS Council membership. Any vacancy occurring on the Council shall be filled within two months.

Alternates from each agency can attend meetings as substitutes when necessary with the understanding that the alternate will have effective knowledge of Council issues and be prepared to make decisions that represent their agency at the meeting. A substitute council member may be required for schedule conflicts or if there are staffing changes within the agency.

Each member of the Council shall have an opportunity to voice an opinion, which may be provided in person or be directed to the Chair and Secretary by written submission. The written submission must be received by the Chair and Secretary at least two (2) days before the meeting and will be circulated to all Council members before the meeting. The number of members specified in Section (3) above shall represent each park or natural space agency.

Should a park or natural space agency require their Board's approval for a decision, comment, or commitment then a decision may be stayed for a period of one (1) month to allow for the decision to be made at the next scheduled agency Board meeting. After the one (1) month time period is reached, a decision must be directed to the Chair and Secretary.

5. Operation of the Council

The Council will be headed by a council member voted Chair. Another council member will be voted Secretary. The Council will elect a new Chair and Secretary or renew the commitment of the current Chair and Secretary every two (2) years. NEPOSS Council members will alternate the responsibility of coordinating and organizing meetings, annual events and information exchanges.

Council may choose to strike committees for individual initiatives which could include council members, other staff of the NEPOSS agencies, stakeholders, interest groups or the general public with the appropriate expertise and interest to participate.

6. Consensus

Consensus is a core value of the NEPOSS Council. To promote consensus, the process requires the Chair to ensure that members consider all views and objections, and endeavor to resolve them, whether these views and objections are expressed by the active participants of the Council or by others (e.g., NEPOSS agencies not active on the Council, an advisory agency (MNR or NEC), an interested stakeholder, or the general public). **Note:** The Chair has the role of assessing consensus within the Council. The advisory agencies may be required to provide direction and approval on specific issues. Any dissenting views should be noted in the Chair's report.

Any member who would like to formally object should cite technical, policy, or legal arguments and propose changes that would remove the objection. Formal objections that do not provide substantive arguments or rationale are unlikely to receive serious consideration by the Chair.

7. Votes

The Council should only conduct a vote to resolve a *substantive issue* after the Chair has determined that all available means of reaching consensus through discussion and compromise have failed, and that a vote is necessary to break a deadlock. In this case the Chair must record the following (e.g., in the minutes of the meeting):

- An explanation of the issue being voted on
- The decision to conduct a vote (e.g., a simple majority vote) to resolve the issue
- Each agency and their vote
- The outcome of the vote
- Any formal objections

Each agency represented in the group has one vote, even when the organization is represented by several participants on the Council. The Chair will normally not vote, except in the case of a tie vote.

8. Meetings

Regular meetings of the Council will be held at times and places determined by the Council; the NEPOSS Council will hold two full – day meetings a year in addition to an annual forum. The Chair may call special meetings to be held at times and places as may be determined by the Council.

A notice, stating the place, meeting host, day and hour of meetings of Council members shall be distributed on an annual basis.

The Council will arrange, on an annual basis, a NEPOSS forum for park and natural space agency staff and persons involved in NEPOSS program implementation for information sharing, knowledge transfer and any other purposes determined by the Council. Park and natural space agencies will host the forum on a rotating basis.

Minutes of meetings (prepared by the Secretary) shall record decisions made, factors considered, and information presented during the meeting. They will also include action items as a reminder to Council members. Minutes of previous meetings shall be approved as part of the agenda.

A Chair may invite an individual with a particular expertise or interest to attend a meeting on an exceptional basis. This person is a meeting guest, not a group participant. Meeting guests do not have voting rights.

9. Quorum

A quorum shall consist of ten (10) members. If a quorum will not be present for any meeting of the Council, the meeting will be cancelled and rescheduled. If a quorum is not present at a meeting, then no decisions can be made by the Council, however, matters of information may be received.

10. Duties

Chair

- Once selected, the Chair will receive the proposed names for the next NEPOSS Council membership rotation
- Preside at all meetings of the Council and generally carry out the purpose for which the Council was organized
- Carry out the activities of the Chair identified throughout these terms of reference
- Appoint a substitute Chair from the NEPOSS Council membership when the Chair is unable to attend a meeting
- The Chair shall identify sub-committees to develop initiatives as required, e.g. coordinate the annual forum
- Approach a member if that member is unable to fulfill their participation commitment
- Inform advisory agencies on all policy, program, planning and operating matters and in particular issues or events that could be of reasonable concern or interest to the MNR or the NEC in carrying out their duties

- Submit an annual Council report to the MNR Director of Policy and Planning Coordination Branch
- Oversee the development of the annual business plan
- Attend and provide a NEPOSS Council presentation at the NEC biannual Policy Meetings

Members

Participation by an individual as a NEPOSS Council Member on an ongoing basis implies a serious commitment to the NEPOSS Council, including all of the following:

- Attending Council meetings
- Providing deliverables or drafts of deliverables in a timely fashion
- Being familiar with all relevant documents of the Council, including minutes of past meetings
- Following discussions through correspondence between scheduled meetings.

Secretary

- Distribute annual schedule of meetings
- Record and circulate meeting minutes.
- Appoint a substitute Secretary from the NEPOSS Council membership when the Secretary is unable to attend a meeting.
- Carry out the activities of the Secretary identified throughout these terms of reference

MNR Advisor

- Attend Council meetings
- Provide advice and recommendations to the Council as required
- Ensure Council initiatives are compatible with existing policies, programs and plans
- Liaise with appropriate MNR branches and field offices
- Liaise on annual reporting and financial support matters

NEC Advisor

- Attending Council meetings
- Provide advice and recommendations to the Council as required
- Liaise with appropriate NEC staff as required

11. Agendas

The Chair shall set agendas for each meeting, after input from other Council members and the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Niagara Escarpment Commission advisors. Agendas and related information packages will be set two (2) weeks prior to a regular meeting.

12. Finances

Each year through existing Ministry processes for securing operating funds, the MNR will seek to confirm financial support for direct meeting costs. The Ministries' continued financial support will be based on the annual report of objectives met and activities completed.

13. Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference should be reviewed biannually by Council to see if changes are required. Any changes to the approved Terms of Reference should be circulated to the participating park and natural space agencies for review and approval.

14. Reporting/Provision of Advice

The Council Chair will provide the MNR Director of Policy and Planning Coordination Branch with an annual report. The annual report to the Ministry may include a description of Council activities and achievements during the fiscal year. Other reports may be directed to the Ministry as required.

The Council Chair with support of the Council may request meetings with the Minister to discuss matters of mutual importance to the Council and the Ministry, such as, the priorities for NEPOSS implementation and the resolution of any issues or concerns.

15. Annual Work Plan

The Council will set the goals, objectives and strategic directions for the Council in an annual work plan.