



MARKHAM ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

**Electronic Zoom Meeting
January 27, 2022**

Attendance

Present

Stuart Cumner, Chair
Andrew Hazen, Vice Chair
Ashok Bangia
Karl Lyew
Frank Vignando
Paddy Wong

Staff

Gabriela Ansari-Correa, Community
Engagement Assistant
Janet Reid, Community Engagement
Program Specialist
Graham Seaman, Director Sustainability &
Asset Management
Jennifer Wong, Sustainability Coordinator
Bev Shugg Barbeito, Committee Clerk

Guests

Vicki Choy, Canadian Federation of
University Women (CFUW)
Fred Peters, Friends of Swan Lake Park
Rain Geiger, Friends of Swan Lake Park
Madeleine Nevins, Friends of Swan Lake
Park
Gavin Lin, York University student
Catherine Lombardo, York University
student
Ross Lunan, York University student
Sarosh Sheikh, York University student
Vikram Singh, York University student
Zahra Zeinolabedin, York University
student

Regrets

Caryn Bergmann, Immediate Past Chair
Victoria Genge
Karl Fernandes
Phil Ling
Regional Councillor Joe Li

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Markham Environmental Advisory Committee (MEAC) was called to order at 7:05 PM with Stuart Cumner presiding as Chair.

2. CHANGES OR ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

The agenda was accepted as distributed.

3. ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES OF THE MARKHAM ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON NOVEMBER 25, 2021

As there was no quorum, adoption of the minutes of the meeting held on November 25, 2021 was deferred to the next meeting.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

No report was available.

5. MEAC FOCUS FOR 2021

Vice Chair Andrew Hazen welcomed the York University "Cross Campus Capstone Classroom" (C4) students working with MEAC on the "Get Your Lawn Off Gas!" project. The students presented the results of their research to date:

- Studies show that gas mowers do emit more CO₂ and also particulate matter which can enter the bloodstream
- Use of gas mowers result in health consequences, loss of habitat, noise pollution
- Markham would like residents to switch away from gas-powered garden equipment (to electric/human-powered equipment or to adopt lawn-free garden options).

The students discussed ideas to promote the switch away from gas powered garden equipment, including:

- Lawn mower exchange – the students will conduct a survey of residents to determine an estimate of current gas mower usage and will approach “big box” stores about providing a discount to residents who turn in their gas mower in favour of buying an electric or human-powered model
- Alternative lawns – this option would allow residents to eliminate lawn mowers entirely; lawns could be personalized and could include, among others, vegetable gardens, flower or shrub gardens, rock paths, and grasses
- Community gardens – could appeal to younger Markham residents

Methods of proposed outreach include:

- Educational pamphlet and flyers to guide residents to choose electric mowers
- Approach managers of big box stores to discuss benefits to Markham residents as well as benefits to the store in potential sales

It was thought that this project has great potential as a pilot project and would be a good fit for Earth Month. The Sustainability Office is planning a “30 Days/30 Posts” campaign for Earth Month and thinks it would be beneficial to include this project in that campaign.

On behalf of the Committee, Chair Stuart Cumner thanked the students for their thorough presentation. The York University Cross Campus Capstone Classroom (C4) students left the meeting at 7:50 pm.

6. NEW BUSINESS

A. Friends of Swan Lake Park

Fred Peters, a resident of the Swan Lake community in Markham, presented “A Holistic Approach To Realizing Community Goals For Restoration of Swan Lake and Swan Lake Park”. Mr. Peters discussed the processes underway to enhance Swan Lake and its poor aquatic environment. It was reported that the community objectives for engagement, restoration of aquatic and terrestrial habitat need to be integrated into an Eco Park strategy for Swan Lake, similar to Brampton’s Eco Park strategy and Lake Enhancement strategy. It is thought that a healthy aquatic environment would lead to a healthy environment for birds and wildlife, and healthy greenspace benefits all of Markham. The Friends of Swan Lake Park are advocating for Markham to:

1. Adopt “holistic” Eco Park approach that recognizes “Restoration” of Swan Lake and Swan Lake Park as a critical community need.
2. Establish a “Mesotrophic” state as an “aspirational” long-term water quality goal
3. Approve Pathway to Sustainability – long-term sustainable solutions that restore aquatic and terrestrial environment
4. Implement a Stewardship Plan that integrates all departmental elements and existing policies.

The Friends of Swan Lake Park would like MEAC support for:

1. the “Restoration” Objective
2. the Eco Approach that integrates Community objectives with restoration processes
3. the establishment of a Stewardship Plan to include an environmental monitoring framework

Graham Seaman noted that Markham has conducted cleanups in the past but has not done so recently due to concerns related to Covid. The Friends of Swan Lake Park proposal would need coordination from many City departments; the project will be beneficial for the environment but will likely be a two-step process.

Chair Stuart Cumner will encourage MEAC members to review the presentation material and the Committee will consider the motion at the next meeting.

On behalf of the Committee, Chair Stuart Cumner thanked Fred Peters and the Swan Lake team for their comprehensive presentation.

Fred Peters and the Swan Lake team left the meeting at 8:30 pm.

B. Earth Month Planning

Gabriela Ansari-Correa reported that planning for Earth Month is still in the early planning stage. The focus for 2022 will be virtual programming which will be promoted via a social media program similar to that of last year. There will be a page on the Markham website to advise residents what Markham is doing for Earth Month and how they can get involved. It is expected that there will be a photo contest similar to last year’s contest, a virtual Earth Day event on April 21, as well as some Home Efficiency Retrofit Orientation (HERO) workshops to be scheduled during Earth Month. It was also noted that workshops about community gardens and sustainable gardens would be offered in April, as well as a youth challenge to reduce carbon impact by using local foods.

7. OTHER BUSINESS

- Ban on Single Use Plastics - Vicki Choy reviewed the letter from the Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW) Markham/Unionville requesting that Markham take immediate action to implement the ban on single use plastics. It was suggested that this could be included in Earth Month programming. Jennifer Wong will coordinate the approach with the appropriate departments.
- Idling of Cars – It was reported that there is a problem with Markham residents not respecting the 3-minute idling timeline. It was noted that it is a challenge to enforce this by-law. Suggestions to help resolve the problem included:
 - Friendly reminders in green publications
 - Street signs indicating the idling time limit
 - Include a reminder as one of the 30 posts in 30 days
- New Members – Laura Gold, Council and Committee Coordinator, Clerk's Department, will be consulted on progress in recruiting new members for the Committee.

8. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Markham Environmental Advisory Committee is scheduled for Thursday, February 24, 2022 at 7:00 p.m., via Zoom.

9. ADJOURNMENT

The Markham Environmental Advisory Committee adjourned at 8:50 PM.