

FRIENDS OF THE PARK REPORT FOR 2021/2022

By Karen Squires and Katherine Hall

Friends of the park, on behalf of the board of directors, work to ensure continued local stewardship of the park as a natural resource, in consultation with relevant stakeholders. In 2021, NECA (through New Edinburgh News) invited residents of New Edinburgh to share what they enjoyed about the park and what was important for them. Based on their response and ongoing priorities, here are some key highlights for 2021/2022.

INVASIVE SPECIES, COMMUNICATION, AND WORKING TOGETHER

In 2021, Spongy moths were a huge issue which impacted not only trees in the park but green canopies in and around the city. NECA liaised with City staff to be prepared for what might have been another destructive year for our leafy trees, impacting biodiversity, insects, birds, natural habitat etc... An article was written in NEN February 2022 highlighting information and what support was available from the city, facilitated by NECA Friends of the Park. This information was again highlighted at our first park clean up since the start of the pandemic on Earth Day! Protecting our green spaces and biodiversity was cited by residents who responded on park suggestions as well as more clean-ups. We had a good turn out to our park clean-up in the spring and it was decided another clean-up was necessary for fall of 2022 to keep the park maintained, with increased visitation.

Friends of the Park liaised with residents and students to provide burlap kits from the city to mitigate the anticipated spongy moth invasion for 2022. While this was a good initiative to make people aware and protect the trees, the volume of moths turned out to be considerably lower than expected, as compared to the previous year. An article was written in the October NEN from our resident Biologist, Iola Price on why the numbers were lower this year.

INCREASED VISITOR VOLUMES, VENDORS AND HOMELESSNESS BRING NEW CHALLENGES

In the fall of 2021, with the increase of homelessness throughout the city, Stanley Park users saw more tents popping up and liaised with Friends of the Park and NECA about some of their concerns and issues. NECA's Friends of the Park liaised with City staff as they have an outreach program whereby communication is started with people living in the tents to find a better solution, in the mid to long term for their housing needs. Throughout the summer period, the tents continued to pop up around the park and increased liaison with the city's parks division was necessary to ensure ongoing safety for all users. City staff liaised with tent residents and ongoing communications between NECA and city staff grew considerably throughout the

summer of 2022 for a number of reasons. After tents are dismantled, sometimes there is considerable garbage remaining and this needs to be addressed for health and safety reasons.

Due to increased park usage from numerous demographics, including the new summer market vendors at the Fieldhouse, more garbage was deposited near the Fieldhouse in plastic bags which could not fit into nearby bins. While more seasonal bins were requested by NECA, it took sustained communication throughout the entire summer period to finally get them installed near the Fieldhouse late August/early September. NECA will continue to liaise with CCC and City staff to find better solutions for next year. Finally, as of early October, we are pleased to report excessive garbage from tents has been removed through ongoing liaison with the City's parks team throughout the summer.

MORE PARK CLEAN UPS, BETTER MANAGEMENT OF GREEN SPACES AND PROTECTING NATURAL HABITAT MOVING FORWARD

NECA's Friends of the park is organizing a NEW fall park clean-up, scheduled for October 28th from 4-6pm with the rain date being October 29th from 10-noon. The bags and gloves have been ordered again from the City's "Clean Up the Capital" program and we've outlined the details in the October issue of New Edinburgh News. We've liaised with the CCC to once again to ensure usage of the gazebo space area behind the fieldhouse.

In summary, with a higher volume of users in the park, sadly more garbage is left behind and with increased homelessness, more tents will likely continue to pop up. Moving forward, a more concerted effort will need to be made in order to address some of these issues, as volume of park users increase. As residents who responded to what they liked in the park and what they would like to see more of, some key themes were natural setting, improve biodiversity by native plant species, more garbage bins and more benches. We've seen some new benches installed this year and after much liaison back and forth, more seasonal bins were installed. However, we must continue to work with City staff, the CCC and other stakeholders to enhance safety, reduce friction between different users and maintain greenspaces as written in the 2022-2023 Strategic Priorities for NECA. Small changes such as the fence just installed around the splash pad improves safety for multiple users of the park.

During the latter part of summer, a new Mural was installed on the side of the Fieldhouse to celebrate the area's Algonquin heritage following the inaugural Chief Pinesi Day on July 1st. This is a good example of an event and art installation which supports another one of NECA's priorities (ie) heritage and especially in this case, Indigenous heritage on the lands we give thanks and recognition to at each NECA meeting. This is a good example of supporting Indigenous heritage in a designated heritage district of Ottawa. As we consider climate change, protecting our green spaces and natural habitat will be even more important as we lose more

trees (impacting our ecosystem) due to invasive species and sustained intense weather conditions. We will consider ways and further expertise to protect these natural spaces for all to enjoy today and for years to come.