

Friends of the Spit

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Lake Ontario Park: Update
TRCA Open House: Wed. Nov. 28th
Happy Birthday: We're 30!



NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2007

As an Editorial: #1

Lake Ontario Park - Update

WaterfronToronto's fumble of the public consultation process [see feature article] for Lake Ontario Park is regrettable but not irreversible. The park itself has the potential to be iconic and to revitalize the waterfront. The Spit and Baselands are the key component in this park and, as the natural urban wilderness, will ultimately be "the jewel in the crown". The well-attended public meeting January 17th resulted in many group and individual submissions to WaterfronToronto. Unfortunately, many of these went unacknowledged and unconsidered. The summary and analysis of the public comments received at and after the January 17th meeting wasn't issued until October!!

The disappointment with the public process voiced by the vast majority of participants at the November 6th Stakeholders' Meeting should serve notice to the consultants and WaterfronToronto that we in Toronto are used to a consultative planning process and we demand that all our input be collectively assessed by the consultants, presented, and then reanalysed by the community-at-large. This is an immense opportunity for Lake Ontario Park to define, once-and-for-all, generously, the boundaries of the natural areas of the Spit and the Baselands and forever protect them from the incursions of inappropriate uses.

C'mon WaterfronToronto: rev the process up, consult like mad, and then plan the park: act with the community, not in isolation.

As an Editorial: #2

FOS Website

Many of you have been emailing us through our website: please keep those emails coming. If you have any photos that you would like to post to our website, please email them and we'll do our best to get them up. Of course, credit will be given to the photographer. (www.friendsofthespit.ca)

Lake Ontario Park: Disappointment

After nearly ten months of relative silence, WaterfronToronto convened a meeting of the Lake Ontario Park Stakeholder Advisory Committee (of which Friends of the Spit is a member). This third meeting (previous ones being January 10th, 2007, and September 19th, 2006) was treated to a 71 image PowerPoint presentation by Richard Kennedy of Field Operations, the New York City landscape architects. Unfortunately, this presentation showed few design changes from that of the January 17th public meeting. The proposal still showed a canal/channel cutting straight through the Spit Baselands from east to west, and still showed large sportsfields south of the road known as Unwin Avenue. A circular boardwalk still "organized" the Baselands!! The Adventure Centre (is it "son of Discovery Centre", or something different?) was still shown at the eastern edge of the Outer Harbour. Does the Outer Harbour Marina really need a destination restaurant?

However, what made the meeting notable was the fact that this design presentation was addressed only in a very minor way, in passing. Virtually all the volunteer stakeholders present (sailors, naturalists, citizens, Spit pals alike) instead questioned the WaterfronToronto reps at length about the lack of consultation, the lack of information, and the poor communication up to this point. While many speakers expressed their disbelief that they would be asked to provide comments on new thumbnail sketches within two weeks, others wondered how high level planning could occur in the absence of soil reports and other site specific information [soil reports have recently been commissioned, and the study's first study phase just completed; a natural heritage (tree canopy, etc.) study has also been commissioned]. Those participants made the point that planning without this information was "cart before the horse".

To its credit, WaterfronToronto promised, within two weeks, to get back to the stakeholders with ways in which they (WaterfronToronto) would improve the consultation process and improve communications with the stakeholders, including better ways to disseminate information and materials. As of this newsletter, we are in that time span, and eagerly await the changes to the process so that the planning of Lake Ontario Park can continue anew, refreshed: so that all stakeholders can feel that their comments and their participation are receiving attention.

Now – if only those NYC consultants will delete the canal, respect the natural areas.....

Portlands Energy Centre Update

You've noticed the immense power plant being constructed south of the ship channel, north of the Baselands, and east of the now mothballed Hearn Generating Station. As part of the plant's operating protocol, the province mandated PEC to establish a community liaison committee. Friends of the Spit was represented on that committee. Equitable terms of reference were struck which augured that the committee could actually have an effective role, both in the shaping of the landscape and the construction, and in the ongoing monitoring of emissions. Many committee members had fought the establishment of the plant itself but, when it became obvious the plant would indeed be built, joined the committee in an effort to ameliorate the plant's impact. Unfortunately, the process didn't work, and a majority of the committee resigned en masse on May 22nd. It is unclear what PEC intends to do in lieu of this mandated process.

Good News About Park Staffing:

Good news: at the Tommy Thompson Park Advisory Committee Meeting of November 13th, 2007, the TRCA staff announced that the TRCA would add a second full-time staff member for the Spit during the van-operation months (May to October). Friends of the Spit has long advocated and pressured for additional staff: one attendant just isn't enough. Thanks to the TRCA for finding their way within their internal budget to providing this second staffer.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY! WE'RE 30!

Hard to believe! We're certain that the initial pioneers, even as they fought simply to get access to this incredible piece of land being built out into Lake Ontario, dreamed of a day when the Spit would be spoken of by all as an incredible public urban wilderness! As these pioneers bicycled along behind their security escort, did they truly understand how the feeling of wilderness, water, wind, and waves, would resonate with the citizens of Toronto, and make the Spit one of Toronto's most loved spots?

We forget how easily the Spit could have been something else. If it weren't for the dedicated volunteers and members of Friends, with all the help of our supporters from other groups and organizations, the Spit would be very different. In a bad dream, imagine the Spit and Baselands with an industrial subdivision, nine sailing clubs, parking lots, car traffic to the tip, Discovery Centre, historic boat mooring, air strip, golf academy and driving range, wind turbines, etc., etc. Friends and our allies have saved the Spit from these!

Well, the Spit is a wonderful place for what it is – undeveloped – and it's that love of the Spit and the Baselands that propels our membership, and keeps us and our allies striving to have everyone understand that the Spit is indeed amazing and worthy of preservation. "Let it Be!" was, and still is, a fine rallying cry! Hats off to those who founded Friends of the Spit 30 years ago! Cheers!

Fencing the Baselands: what a shame!

As you probably noticed, a chainlink fence now surrounds the City of Toronto land on the Baselands to the east of the main Spine Road. Without consultation, the Ashbridge's Bay Sewage Treatment Plant erected this fence, citing security concerns!! The Sewage Plant already had a fairly formidable fence and berm along its southern boundary: why did it need to fence off a further portion of the Baselands? We've never seen any "security risks". Our questions to city staff remain unanswered, as no one quite knows "why the fence, and why now?" Why would one arm of the City spend money to privatize City land far in advance of whenever it is needed? This land may ultimately be for sewage plant expansion, but, in the meantime, it should stay as accessible parkland! Now out of the public realm, will the City return it to the public?

Motorized Vehicles on the Spit

Through our website, we've received a number of emails from Spit visitors concerned about motorized vehicles on the Spit. In one instance, there was a repetitive series of two "pocket motorcycle" racers who would travel up and down the Spine Road. The Conservation Authority was notified, as was 55 Division, and it's our understanding that these individuals were identified and warned off the Spit. Thanks to those who emailed us.

A cautionary note: if an emergency, or should you see behaviour or incidents which are illegal, dial 911. Do not risk your own safety by approaching these individuals. Report other troublesome items to the TRCA staff member on site, or call the community policing officers at 55 Division (Community Foot Patrol 416-808-5533).

TRCA Open House: an invitation from the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority to all Spit Pals:

TOMMY THOMPSON PARK PLAN TO ENHANCE NATURAL HABITAT ON CENTRAL WATERFRONT Information Session to Provide Update of Master Plan Implementation

Tommy Thompson Park, a created peninsula extending five kilometres into Lake Ontario, has evolved into one of the most significant biological wonders on Toronto's waterfront. Known locally as the Leslie Street Spit, the Park been managed by Toronto and Region Conservation (TRCA) since the early 1970s as an urban wilderness park and attracts well over 300,000 visitors annually.

The \$8 million funding partnership between TRCA and Waterfront Toronto has resulted in the implementation of key components of the Master Plan including natural area enhancements and the construction of a park trail system.

Come and learn about what we have accomplished to date and what activities we have scheduled for the year ahead.

When: Wednesday, November 28, 2007

Where: Council Chambers, Toronto City Hall
100 Queen Street West

Agenda:	6:30-7:00PM	Open House
	7:00-7:30PM	Presentation
	7:30-8:45PM	Question & Answer
	8:45-9:00PM	Wrap Up

For more information, please contact Catherine DeAbreu at cdeabreu@trca.on.ca or 416-661-6600, ext. 5305.