

Friends of the Spit

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NEWSLETTER

May 2023

WELCOME TO SPRING !!!



TRCA Staff at Cell 2. May 2021

Congratulations to Toronto Field Naturalists 100 years young!

Friends of The Spit extend our best wishes and our profound appreciation to Toronto Field Naturalists on the hundredth anniversary of their founding.

Since the establishment of Friends of The Spit in 1977 to advocate for a public urban wilderness at Toronto's Leslie Street Spit, the Toronto Field Naturalists (TFN) have provided unwavering support for our mission. That support manifested itself in the many individuals who supported Friends of The Spit at countless public planning meetings, and in the position that the organization took as a whole to ally themselves to our cause. This support carried weight, and, we are certain, influenced the decision-makers! We are tremendously grateful for the support we have received from the Toronto Field Naturalists.

The role of the Toronto Field Naturalists in the history of Toronto has been extremely valuable, and critical. Our cause is just one example of the respect and influence that this city-wide organization can bring to bear on any issue.

Best wishes to TFN for the next hundred years, and thanks again for your support. We know we can count on the TFN for further support in these coming months and years.



Black Swallowtail. May

What's going on ?? (Still NO Stakeholder Advisory Committee!)

communication issues continue
a dearth of public participation

In May and June 2021, the City of Toronto and the TRCA both passed resolutions which established a joint management committee of all government landowners to examine The Spit/Tommy Thompson Park and come up with a management plan within the context of the master plan and come up with a stable funding model.

The committee was established, and an internal working sub-committee of the City and TRCA was established. The working sub-committee is comprised of City and TRCA staff, and does not include representatives from PortsToronto, CreateTO, and the province - they are represented on the overall TTP Joint Committee.

We campaigned to meet with the committee and were given that opportunity June 7th, 2022. At that time, amongst many other items, we stressed the need for an Advisory Committee, composed of a wide range of Stakeholders with on-Spit experience and who all supported the Master Plan: an Advisory Committee that could advise and assist the TRCA and the City, and re-establish good communications.

At the start of this year (January 4th) we wrote both the City and the TRCA and asked for their 2023 plans for The Spit (from capital works – plantings, construction- to maintenance and security through to staffing – including upcoming events). Both the City and the TRCA deferred an answer, and instead suggested that we again meet with the joint committee. That meeting was scheduled for mid-March, but due to March Break, was postponed until March 28th.

Our representative was allocated 20 minutes to address the joint working committee with our concerns.

The time allocated provided a brief opportunity for us to speak on behalf of our thousands of members and social media followers. The primary concerns expressed were that the Joint Committee adhere to the 1992 Revised Master Plan (MP) and Environmental Assessment (EA), specifically that The Spit remain free from Pets and Motorized Vehicles. It was noted that the interested parties involved in the 1992 plan accepted the MP and EA conditions. The Aquatic Park Sailing Club was given an exemption to the no-vehicles portion of the MP and EA – this exemption will lapse once the park is fully open seven days a week.

FOS was given some indication that the Master Plan would be followed but no absolute commitment as we were told that it needs to mesh with the City's overall plan for Toronto Parks. In retrospect we found this disconcerting. However, at the very least, The Spit was recognized by at least one of the City representatives as a unique park in the City's system of parks and that the 1992 Master Plan and EA would be the guiding document.

FOS has requested an update from this working group on how they are progressing and how they are planning to address many of the problems that the TRCA and City projects at The Spit have encountered.

These include (in no particular order) the substandard new (!!) parking lot at the main entrance, the lack of heat and electricity to the staff booth, the lack of a consistent staff presence to deter pets (predominantly dogs), motorized vehicles, commercial filming, raves and parties, fires and encampments. Our request also included a number of other nagging issues. To date we have not received any response or any acknowledgement of our requests (other than being informed of the Annual TTP Bird Festival - See our website or FB page).

No habitat construction plans have been mentioned to us, nor have any other events. In particular, we have been very concerned about the random proliferation of plantings at The Spit, particularly those that erase meadows. ALL proposed plantings must be viewed in the context of the Master Plan. The Spit is not the repository for other agencies' compensatory plantings... the Spit is already a nature preserve. At a minimum, those compensatory planting should go to places in the city that need them! Whatever happened to "let it Be" ? ... to let Nature do it ?

We have not received any timeline for public commentary and input for the new Spit lands at the Ashbridge's Bay Treatment Plant project.

Most troubling, there was no timeline given for the re-establishment of an Advisory Committee of stakeholders. The advice of an Advisory Committee would be valuable for all the items noted above. As an example, in the past, habitat creation plans and planting plans were reviewed by the former advisory committee, both on-site and in meetings, with substantive improvements made as a result.

In this day and age when our provincial and municipal governments now decree what is going to happen with public space without meaningful public consultation, we are extremely concerned !

It is FOS's mandate to continue the consultative process and public engagement with our elected officials and their public servants. FOS has always been transparent with the TRCA and the City and we have shared our information where and when difficulties arose.

We have advised the City and the TRCA that when they make changes without public consultation they raise the ire of the population that they serve, especially those of us who cherish the Spit as a Nature Preserve.

A member of the joint working group has informed us that we will be receiving a long-awaited official update in May.

TIME for the re-establishment of an ADVISORY Committee... sooner, not later.

It's been years since the TRCA disbanded the User Group (October 2020)

Vote for Mayor!

Although Friends of The Spit is **unaligned politically**, and is associated with **no** political party or political system, we support those who support The Spit as a car-free Public Urban Wilderness.

We do want you all to exercise your franchise and vote for a new mayor for Toronto. Do ask yourself which candidate will support and bolster our natural spaces and parks, which candidate will fight for nature in the city, and, most particularly, which candidate will fully support the Tommy Thompson Park Revised Master Plan and Environmental Assessment.

We need a mayor who will support The Spit and support nature in the City!!!!!!

Marine Use Strategy and Waterfront Toronto

Recently, you may have heard a Waterfront Toronto rep speaking on CBC Radio about their Marine Use Strategy, and in particular, the possibility of the use of Seabus transit spanning our waterfront.

We have spoken with the good folks at Waterfront Toronto and now can relay to you that the CBC conversation leapt far ahead of where things really are.

Currently, Waterfront Toronto has an RFP out for a consultant to prepare a feasibility report and itemize best practices for water taxi and seabus use, both in the public and private realm, to see if these transportation modes even make sense or are viable. This study will take place over the next eight months, and we have been assured that we will be consulted. As we learn more, we will let you all know.

To reassure all of us, recalling the late 2020 controversy, Waterfront Toronto reiterated that The Spit/TTP is NOT being considered for Seabus or water taxi transit stops.

In the meantime, Waterfront Toronto is hosting an open house:

A Sneak Peek into the Future Eastern Waterfront.

The open house runs May 11 to the 18th at the Waterfront Innovation Centre, 155 Queens Quay East. The opening event will be held May 11th from 6 to 8 PM, with doors open at 5:30 PM.



May