

**The Milne Dam Conservation Area
Multi Use Pathway Community Information Meeting
Wednesday, October 29, 2008
7:00 – 9:00 PM**

Attendance:

Councillors

Deputy Mayor Jack Heath
Councillor, Ward 4 Carolina Moretti

Staff

Alan Brown, Director of Engineering
Lorenzo Mele, Transportation Demand Management Coordinator
Shirley Marsh, Senior Planner, Urban Design
Renee Chong, Capital Works Engineer
Laura Gold, Committee Clerk
Wendy Lucas, Assistant to Carolina Moretti

Toronto Region Conservation Authority

Ron Dewell, Senior Manager - Conservation Lands and Property Services - Toronto
Region and Conservation Authority (TRCA)

The Milne Dam Conservation Area Pathway Community Information Meeting convened at 7:10 p.m. with Councillor Moretti presiding as Chair.

1. OPENING REMARKS

Councillor Moretti welcomed residents and asked them to please sign the sign in sheet in order to be notified of future meetings. Councillor Moretti advised there would be a formal Town wide public meeting in the new year (January or February). Councillor Moretti explained that only residents residing in the immediate Milne Dam Conservation Area (MDCA) were formally invited to tonight's meeting, but welcomed all other residents attending the meeting

Councillor Moretti explained the purpose of the meeting was to keep residents informed, as promised in her election campaign. Councillor Moretti explained that Consultants had gone to the MDCA to conduct an analysis of the area and have presented the Town with a number of options to create a pathway in the area. Noting the options will be reviewed by the Town, and some options will not be endorsed by the Town.

She explained that this meeting was part of a formal process, and that at this meeting the Town will listen to comments from residents and provide feedback. Advising that at the Town wide public meeting in January or February residents will have another opportunity to provide feedback.

The following order of the meeting was provided:

- 1) Introductions
- 2) Presentations
- 3) Questions and Comments

2. INTRODUCTIONS

Councillor Moretti introduced the following people:

- ▶ Alan Brown, Director of Engineering, Town of Markham
- ▶ Lorenzo Mele, Traffic Demand Management Coordinator
- ▶ Shirley Marsh, Senior Planner, Urban Design
- ▶ Renee Chong, Capital Works Engineer
- ▶ Laura Gold, Committee Clerk
- ▶ Ron Dewell, Senior Manager - Conservation Lands and Property Services, Toronto Region and Conservation Authority (TRCA)

3. PRESENTATION

Mr. Brown provided a brief history with respect to the creation of pathways, trails and cycling facilities in Markham. He advised that 8 community meetings were held in conjunction with the creation of the 2006/2007 Master Plans, explaining that at these meetings residents advised that they would like more cycling and pedestrian trails in Markham.

The Cycling and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (CPAC) was created in 2005 to assist the Town with the implementation of the Pathways and Trails Master Plan. He reported that the Town had obtained a grant of 4.5 million dollars from the Municipal Infrastructure Investment Initiative. The grant was provided to create cycling and pedestrian pathways in following areas: 1. Major Mackenzie; 2. Donald Cousens Parkway; and 3. Milne Dam Conservation Area.

Mr. Brown presented the options for the MDCA pathway. He acknowledged the environmental sensitivity of the area and advised that some of the pathway alignment options avoid the most environmentally sensitive areas of the MDCA.

Mr. Brown presented the next steps, which were as follows:

- 1) receive public stakeholder comments
- 2) hold a public open house
- 3) report back to Council regarding the preferred alignment
- 4) submit plan to the TRCA for review and approval

4. QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

The very first resident recognized by the Chair to speak, asked for a show of hands of all those who did not wish this pathway to take place. Almost every resident in the meeting hall raised his/her hand.

Comment 1

A resident advised that he did not want the pathway to go through the MDCA. He believed the Town should consider the option to do nothing. He noted his concern regarding pedestrians crossing the road in Central Option 4 that ends at Markham Road, as there is currently no sidewalk or crossing area.

Mr. Brown advised that if this option was chosen the Town would have to look into establishing a crossing area on Markham Road.

Comment 2

A resident suggested an amendment to central option 4 to relocate the bridge in a different location. He believed his plan touched on the criteria the Town was using to evaluate the options against.

Comment 3

A petition signed by 400 residents opposing the pathways was brought forth, but was not submitted to the Town at this time. These residents requested the MDCA be left alone.

Comment 4

A resident demonstrated his frustration that the Town would be cutting down trees that he and other residents paid for and planted themselves years ago.

It was noted that the Town passed the Tree-By-law and that Members of Council were concerned about trees and also noted that the Mayor's initiative for Trees for Tomorrow.

Comment 5

A resident noted there is already a trail in MDCA and questioned the need for an additional pathway.

Comment 6

A comment was made that the combination of cyclist and pedestrians on sidewalks has failed miserably in the City of Toronto and an article from [The Toronto Star](#) supporting this claim was provided to Councillor Moretti.

The resident questioned if the “existing road network” is being recognized as an asset to be used where possible, in cycling from McCowan Rd. to Main Street, Markham Village. She suggested simply using the route along Southdale Drive, Drakefield Rd, Willowgate Dr, the Riverviews, and on to Milne Lane etc. She explained that all of these roads were cycle-friendly and were used infrequently, noting that they had ample access points for cyclists to walk into the Conservation area to experience nature’s tranquility if any of them would wish to do so. Thus, the Conservation Area would be enjoyed without violating it with the proposed new pathway.

The resident also noted her concern regarding parking, as it costs \$5 to park at the MDCA, consequently, people visiting the area often park on the streets of the subdivision. She commented that most of the residents residing on Banfield Ave. purchased their homes on a Cul-de-sac because it is quiet and because the subdivision was located in conservation area. She was concerned that drivers will park on Banfield Ave. by the entrance to the park, advising that the police place parking complaints with respect to vehicles parked on Banfield Ave. as a very low priority. She explained there are no sidewalks, forcing their children to walk in the middle of the road, possibly with other cars coming down it. She noted that since Banfield Avenue is a “dead end” street, all of the cars turning around will have to do so by reversing on to residents driveways. She was concerned about the safety of the children and their right to feel safe running around on their own properties. She was concerned that sooner or later there will be an accident in which a child will be run over by a reversing car.

The resident also noted Banfield Ave is quite narrow and if two cars were parked opposite each other, a Fire Truck would not make it to a fire at the other end of the road.

Comment 7

One resident believed that the cost of the project was grossly over estimated.

Comment 8

Mr. Brown was asked what type of traffic study the Town conducted to project the increase in the amount of pedestrian, cyclist, and motor vehicle traffic in the area if a pathway were created. He was especially concerned about traffic issues, as the roads are very narrow in the area surrounding the MDCA. The resident advised that he thought every day would be like Canada Day.

Mr. Brown advised that at this point in time there has not been an assessment of the potential increase in traffic, explaining that at this stage the focus has been on considering the different options for establishing a pathway in the MDCA.

Comment 9

An English teacher spoke about how the area is a conservation area and not a park. He advised that the definition of conservation is to preserve and to protect. He believed the money being proposed to build the pathway could be allocated more effectively, for instance towards eliminating poverty in Markham.

Comment 10

The composition of the Cycling and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (CPAC) was questioned. The resident specifically inquired if there is a Committee Member that resides in the Ward 4 area appointed to the Committee.

Mr. Mele advised that the Cycling and Pedestrian Advisory Committee is comprised of up to 20 members of the public and outside agencies, including one (1) representative of the Environmental Advisory Committee, one (1) representative of the Advisory Committee on Accessibility, and two (2) Members of Council.

The residents recommended that Council appoint a Ward 4 representative to the CPAC.

Comment 11

A resident residing on Drakefield Road felt there are already parking issues in the area, especially by the school. She was concerned that the creation of a pathway in the MDCA would create additional parking issues.

Comment 12

The resident advised that he walks or cycles in the MDCA everyday. He believed there is already a balance between conservation and developed areas in the MDCA. Explaining the central area of the park is more developed, and the east side of the park is more preserved.

Comment 13

A resident noted that she did not live close enough to the conservation area to get invited to tonight's meetings. Councillor Moretti explained only residents that live within a 120 m radius from the MDCA area were formally invited to the meeting.

Comment 14

A resident noted that not one of the options presented has no tree impact. She advised that she had observed trees being tagged in the area. She was told that they could be in the way of the pathway, or at risk because of the pathway. She also wanted to know if a study had been conducted on the impact to the animals in the area.

Comment 15

A resident that resides on Princess Street explained how trails and pathways make cities like Ottawa and Chicago special. However, expressed his concern that many of the options would start, or end (or both) on Princess Street. His concern stemmed from an incidence that occurred a few years back, where two men with guns were in the MDCA close to where he resides. He recommended the pathway go through the south side of the MDCA and end at Highway 7. The residents reminded him that the south side of MDCA is too environmentally sensitive for development.

Comment 16

Mr. Dewell, Toronto Region and Conservation Authority (TRCA), was asked why the TRCA is considering this proposal. He was also asked the percentage of projects that continue to go forward when a community resists a project.

Mr. Dewell advised that any development of a conservation area must be approved by the TRCA, and that he had not personally witnessed this type of resistance before, as residents usually favour the development of pathways and trails. He advised that the message of the community will be brought back to the TRCA and taken into consideration when reviewing the options.

Comment 17

A resident was concerned that developing the MDCA by adding a pathway could lead to the rezoning of the area for future redevelopment.

Mr. Brown advised that this proposal does not include plans for redevelopment of the area.

Comment 18

A resident questioned why the term “multi-use” pathway was used on the Town’s website to describe the pathway. Councillor Moretti advised that some of the other pathways being built in Markham will be paved multiuse pathways. Assuring that the MDCA pathway options remain unpaved, limiting the use of the pathway for in-line skating.

Comment 19

A resident that does not drive advised that he uses the MDCA every day to cycle, and would welcome the pathways. He thought he would enjoy the tranquility of the MDCA while cycling. He noted that humans are also animals. The residents responded to his comment, by advising him that the MDCA should be left for nature.

Comment 20

The residents did not feel it made sense to develop a public natural area, when residents are being asked to increase the natural area in their own backyards. She advised her backyard was recently naturalized, and that she now frequently sees deer in her backyard. The resident believed that the pathway should be created along the major streets.

Comment 21

The residents requested that the following notification be provided regarding future public meetings with respect to the creation of a pathway in the MDCA: 1) signs are posted in the MDCA; and 2) the entire subdivision be advised by mail. Councillor Moretti explained there was not extensive advertisement for this meeting because the meeting was intended for residents living within a 120 m radius from the MDCA. She advised that there will be proper meeting notification for the next Town wide public meeting to be held in January or February.

Comment 22

The resident requested that the options and the minutes be posted on the Town's website.

Councillor Moretti advised that additional comments can be faxed to her at (905) 479-7763, or emailed to her at cmoretti@markham.ca

The meeting adjourned at 9:55 PM.