

CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES
COLLIERY DAMS TECHNICAL COMMITTEE
MONDAY, 2014-JAN-27 AT 1:10 P.M.
CITY MANAGER'S MEETING ROOM, CITY HALL, 455 WALLACE STREET

PRESENT:

Colliery Dam Park Preservation Society:
Jeff Solomon
Roblyn Hunter

Snuneymuxw First Nation:
Paul Silvey (1:45 p.m.)

City of Nanaimo:
Toby Seward, Director, Social & Protective Services
Holly Pirozzini, Recording Secretary

Katherine Gordon, Facilitator

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 1:20 p.m.

2. Review / Approve Minutes (2014-Jan-09)

The minutes were approved as presented.

3. Public Communication and Messaging

Colliery Dam Park Preservation Society (CDPPS) expressed concern about the following:

- Dissemination of information to the public.
- More consistent messaging to the public from City officials.
- Political endorsement of the Technical Committee's process.
- The benefits to saving Colliery Dam Park are not being communicated to the public.
- The message is not getting out that due diligence is being done and that there is no imminent risk to the public.
- No inclusion in discussion of the role of the short-term emergency measures (sirens at full volume for 3 minutes, number of signs erected in the park) which are counter-productive to engaging with the community.
- Historical mistrust in the community that hasn't been re-established.
- The community believes that this process is meant to fail, but we would like it to set a positive precedent for dealing with other things in future.
- The issue of funding, which was brought up well before engineers were engaged.

Paul Silvey arrived at the meeting.

CDPPS expressed concern about a Nanaimo Daily News article entitled, *Heavy rains prompt city to closely monitor structures*, dated 2014-Jan-17, where City staff stated that because water levels at the Lower Dam spillway increased during the storm on Friday ... "(It's) not to overstate we were on the verge of panic, but we were getting close enough to going to the next level of alert." This statement was inaccurate and caused fear in the community.

Snuneymuxw First Nation (SFN) stated that the City's message could have been "that despite the rainfall, we are still a significant way away from the dams failing or overtopping."

City of Nanaimo (CoN) apologized for the wording in the newspaper article and asked for suggestions on how we can work together to get a positive message out?

CDPPS provided written "points to promote the process and correct the message" which were reviewed by all present.

Agreed: The next public update will address the issues raised that are pertinent to the work of the Committee [note: draft public update approved].

CoN advised that the City Manager and the Mayor will be advised of the points raised by CDPPS.

SFN stated that it needs to be clear that the points are provided by CDPPS.

The Facilitator will work with CoN and SFN on the potential to include political endorsements of the Technical Committee process with the release of the next public update. A draft Status Update will be provided to the Technical Committee by email this week for approval and subsequent distribution to the public.

CoN advised that DSS is concerned with timeline changes, but is supportive that the Technical Committee is moving forward with a process. An update will be received from GA by 2014-Feb-28, with a full presentation to the Technical Committee by mid April, including recommended options and the risk assessment. The Executive Committee will then review the options with their two respective Councils.

Question: Who made the decision on the number of signs and sirens to be placed in Colliery Park? CoN responded that City staff, engineers, and emergency coordinators, made a commitment to DSS that signs/sirens would be erected in the absence of any immediate remediation work being able to be undertaken.

CDPPS asked that CoN state publicly that there is a very low risk for dam failure this winter to alleviate fear in the community. CoN agreed that it was reasonable to say 'low' risk for dam failure but not 'very low' risk.

Facilitator – DSS need to understand that the group is working hard together; GA is working hard and that taking the time to base the options on complete information is the responsible approach.

CDPPS provided two photographs (dated 2014-Jan-11 and -27) indicating the water level marker located at Colliery Dam Park and questioned the numbers on the marker.

CoN explained that staff has worked with technical engineers to determine the appropriate water levels on the marker for the evacuation process, as follows:

At 0.6m – this is the trigger for City staff to evaluate the water level.

At 0.8m – the Emergency Coordination Centre is activated.

At 0.9m – the Call Alert is sent out to advise that an evacuation may be necessary.

At 1.2m – the area is evacuated.

At 1.5m – the responders are removed from the area.

CDPPS stated that there is a 2m difference between the crest of the dam and the spillway. Concern was expressed that people are alerted at 0.9m to prepare for a possible evacuation.

CoN advised that the numbers on the marker were determined by City staff [further clarified by CoN that they were determined through a series of exercises and input from emergency responders who are Fire, Police, Emergency Management and Public Works staff]. The water level has only reached 0.9m one other time in the past 38 years.

CDPPS asked why the level was so low when beginning emergency measures? CoN said it was because of the volume of water behind the dam that could cause the dam to fail.

CDPPS asked to see the reports supporting this proposed mode of failure as it has only been the overtopping with subsequent erosion of the backside of the dam that has been the mode of failure for concern. CoN responded that GA said that there might be a fissure in the dam which could weaken it.

CDPPS asked why, when it was stated by the City engineer and Dam Safety personnel last winter, that it would take a day or two before there would be concern for dam failure and there would be ample time for evacuation, (no need for sirens) CoN is now planning to evacuate people well before overtopping occurs? (1.1m below dam height for call out and 0.8m below for full evacuation). (Copy of the minutes of the December 6th 2012 meeting was shared).

CDPPS disagreed with the numbers and expressed concern that there are people living in fear and should know that they aren't going to be evacuated in an unrealistic manner.

SFN suggested that DSS be involved with setting the numbers on the marker.

CDPPS stated that the City didn't have to put up signs/sirens and a marker which has traumatized the community for a year.

Question: Can this message to the public be revised? CoN suggested putting a public statement out to inform the public. Also, the Technical Committee status update will be distributed soon, and should provide a higher comfort level to the public.

Agreed: CoN will develop:

- **an information bulletin about the signs and sirens that have been erected in the Park as part of the Emergency Plan, which has been established for an extreme circumstance, and about the Emergency Plan itself; and**
- **a political statement from the Mayor or City Manager to convey a positive and accurate message to the public that the City supports the Technical Committee's process for remediation of the dams. It will be put on the City website (also see above re public update).**

CDPPs suggested that the message also state that it would take numerous hours and possibly days before the dams would fail in a flood event. They added that perceived

misinformation from the City has made them feel obliged to send a message out now from their group.

SFN expressed concern about being drawn into a public relations discussion. The group needs to be in agreement and supportive of all comments made on behalf of the Technical Committee.

CoN stated that Update #4 will be sent out to Council and posted on the City internet site this week which will help with public information. **[Update #4 was circulated on Jan. 28]**

CDPPS stated that they noticed the new information was on the website and it looks good; however, people who are looking for Colliery Dam information, land on the old information which can be very confusing. It was suggested to archive the old information so people will not be confused with what is being done currently with the dams.

4. Next Meetings:

- (1) Tuesday, March 4, 10:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m., City Board Room
[start time changed to 9:00 a.m.]
- (2) Thursday, April 10, 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m., City Board Room

5. Any other Business /Conclusion:

The meeting concluded at 2:30 p.m.