

# Natural Environment and Lake Stewardship Committee

Thursday, January 19, 2023

*written by Claire Huene, Co-chair / Secretary*

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## **Committee Members Present:**

Karen Laustsen (Chair); Claire Huene (Co-chair / Secretary); Connie Beaton; Sharon Cockx; Ade MacDonald-Smith; Bob Miller; Karen Foudy (Council Rep)

## **Public Attendees:**

None

## **Regrets:**

Debby Brotzell; Tooney Fink (Committee Volunteer)

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Online meeting called to order by C. Huene at 6:30 p.m.

- **Agenda** – Regular meeting of the NELS Committee
- **Approval of Prior Minutes** – Minutes of the November 09, 2022 meeting were approved November 17, 2022.

## **1. Updates / Old Business**

### **COMPOST PILE:**

- Admin was tasked with finding out how much testing would cost. Aaron Chee of Yellow Leaf Engineering said there is no need to test compost (Dec. 6/22 meeting)
- Council decided (Dec. 6/22 meeting) to manage the existing pile by spreading it out. The budget indicates \$15,000 has been set aside to manage the compost pile.
- Policy contacted NELS (January 5/23) to ask:  
*"I am reaching out to ask if NELS has any concerns or feedback regarding the spreading of yard waste in the area. As you may be aware, we reached out to Yellow Leaf Engineering to ask whether testing the yard waste is necessary for us before spreading us. They advised us against testing as the yard as Compost is not in and of itself a reason to suspect environmental impairment. Please let us know if you have any concerns! Thank you, Hassan Saeed, SVGL Administration"*
- NELS conferred and replied (January 9/23) to Council via Policy:  
*"The NELS Committee members have now discussed Council's idea to spread out the compost pile material and the majority are NOT in favor of this solution. The main reason is that the pile is heavily infested with a wide variety of weeds, weed seeds, and roots (including weeds listed on the provincial noxious weeds list, such as Canada*

*Thistle and Creeping Bell Flower). In addition, the older, deeper layers of the pile consist mainly of clay and rocks from dredging the breakwater area.*

*Although many of our public areas do have some weeds, spreading the compost pile in public areas around the village would very likely create a much bigger weed problem.*

*The compost pile weeds would actually benefit by being spread out and would likely thrive in new locations. Unfortunately, since many weed varieties have become semi-resistant to herbicide treatment, we could end up with difficult and wide-spread weed problem as a result. With regard to the clay dredgings in the pile, that material is essentially sterile (contains little to no organic material) and if spread around would create very difficult conditions where few plants (other than weeds!) could grow.*

*The NELS Committee did not consider the option of spreading out the compost pile when we prepared our Compost Pile Report and Recommendations for Council in September 2022, but after due consideration at this time, it is our opinion that distributing the compost pile around the village may end up creating larger problems than it currently poses sitting in a heap. The cost to mitigate a widespread weed infestation and correcting for the clay content would be expensive, not to mention environmentally unfriendly.*

*Since you have said that the compost pile does not have to be tested for potential environmental hazards, would it be possible to dispose of it at a local landfill, or could it be sold or donated as clean fill for one of the construction projects in the area, as suggested in the September Council meeting? Failing this, our recommendation remains to haul it away and start over, as detailed in our Compost Pile Report and Recommendations to Council from September 2022.*

*Thanks for asking for our input in this matter.*

*Sincerely, Karen Laustsen (on behalf of the NELS Committee)”*

- Karen F provided a verbal update to say that the current plan is for Carey F to rent a bulldozer and level out the pile where it is currently situated rather than haul it away. She says if weeds need to be sprayed, they will be sprayed. After that, Council will get a bin for yard waste and have it emptied periodically.
- NELS maintains that removal is still the best option, especially given that funds have been set aside. We will re-iterate the NELS position and suggested alternatives by submitting this e-mail in writing at the next Council meeting.

#### **BEAR-PROOF GARBAGE AND RECYCLING BINS:**

- Council decided (Dec. 6/22 meeting) to go ahead and purchase two bear-proof garbage bins, but decided that bear-proof bins are not necessary for recycling because “recycling bins should not contain any food products or organics which attract a bear.” Instead, Admin will “aim to share information with the village to encourage practising safe disposal procedures [for recyclables].”
- NELS discussed these decisions and applauds Council for opting to purchase bear-proof garbage bins, but strongly disagrees that bear-proof recycling bins are not required. NELS will put this in writing to submit at the next Council meeting.

- Karen F. provided a verbal update to say that Blu Planet is cancelling its contract with SVGL, so all bins (bear-proof garbage bins, recycling bins, and compost bins) need to be re-costed and acquired from a different provider. No mention of why the contract is being cancelled.

### **CARRIAG RIDGE:**

- NELS organized and hosted a two-hour information session for villagers on Nov. 20/22 to review the details of the decision letter and explain the process for appealing the decision. NELS also created a subsequent mail-out to help villagers understand how to fill out the electronic appeal form. The information session was attended by 17 villagers, including members of Council and Administration.
- In mid-December, NELS again prepared a mail-out to villagers to review / explain the issues related to a possible stay of the Preliminary Certificate.
- Current status: A decision on the possible stay of the Preliminary Certificate will be made soon. The Alberta Appeals Board is waiting to receive all of the background information from AEP. The next update will probably be in the spring.

### **EDUCATIONAL EVENTS:**

- Karen L has arranged an Astronomy event with Jeff Z for Friday, January 27/23 at 8 p.m. Hopefully we will be able to see a greenish comet through Jeff's telescope. NELS will provide hot apple cider and snacks. People must provide their own mugs. Claire created an advertisement and sent it to both Ghost Lake Live and Policy for distribution to villagers.
- Karen L will try to arrange a Bear Awareness event for Saturday, May 13/23 (the weekend before the Victoria Day weekend). Confirmation to follow when the details are worked out.
- Karen F asked us to add our meetings and events to the village calendar inside the community centre.

## **2. West Spring Project:**

### **BIOLOGICAL SURVEY:**

- We agreed that this should go "on hold" until 2024. Karen L will contact the biologist to let him know.

### **FAIRY TRAIL BOARDWALK:**

- Karen L provided details of the (lower) re-costing of this project. Also, it may be possible to get cedar poles from Fortis that have no preservatives.
- There were suggestions around the possibility of making this into a public awareness event in the village. Maybe invite children to create painted rocks, etc. to place along the Fairy Trail (since most of the previous objects have been stolen

or removed)? Maybe ask villagers if anyone has lumber or materials that they could donate to the project, and if anyone could volunteer their time to help with construction? Maybe suggest a 50/50 matching event where NELS fundraises 50% and Council matches?

- After further discussion, Karen L will create a proposal to submit to Council.

### **STORY MAP PROJECT:**

- Karen L provided an update. She and Tooney will meet with Kai in the next few weeks to begin transitioning material into the software. Also, Karen L has talked with Debby regarding the original survey maps.

### **3. NELS Three-year Plan Update**

- Arkayla Springs / Carraig Ridge – increase awareness among villagers
  - Karen L will prepare a short background summary of the players and the issues for the webpage
- species at risk inventory – as above in 2 – Biological Survey
- ideas for newsletter articles from NELS:
  - NELS articles should be short; perhaps two or three paragraphs. Would be nice to have a few articles written and ready for publication at any time
  - Karen F said that the village intends to publish 3-4 times per year
  - Karen L - article about value of fescue grasses
  - Bob - article about the purpose / general plan for the Lake Stewardship committee
  - Maybe an article encouraging more people to join NELS?
  - Maybe an article about grants available for solar panels?
  - Maybe an article about water conservation?
- 2023 review of Sustainability Plan, Municipal Development Plan, and Land Use Bylaw in preparation for 2023 Land Use Bylaw Review
  - Council has budgeted \$18,000 for the Land Use Bylaw review. We asked Karen F what those funds will be used for, when the review will begin, and how many people have volunteered for the review committee. She said that the funds will be used to hire a consultant, and that the review will begin “in the spring.” She does not know how many people have volunteered.
  - NELS needs to plan its own review in preparation for the Land Use Bylaw review.
- topics for minimum of two educational events in 2023
  - Astronomy event (January 2023)?
  - Bear awareness event (May 2023)?
  - Kathryn Hull on native grasses (late summer / fall 2023)? KL to investigate
  - Wildflower walk on the hill (spring / summer 2023)? Perhaps Iris Morgan would lead for us? Connie to investigate.
- NELS resource hub – on hold

- inventory of natural areas and assets in the village; natural areas strategy and action plan
  - Karen L was able to secure a quote for costs from Cows and Fish. We discussed the possibility of breaking the work down into smaller parts, for example completing the riparian areas assessment first, and the uplands assessment second. Karen L and Claire will look further at the quote and work on a proposal to submit to Council.
- proposal for Fairy Trail boardwalk – as above in 2 – Fairy Trail Boardwalk
- monitoring and impact assessment process for disc golf course – see below (4)

#### **4. Disc golf monitoring / impact assessment process**

- No update at this time. NELS recommended at the Sept. council meeting that there be no further mowing or driving on the upper grasslands before the monitoring / impact assessment process is established.
- NELS to research what other natural grasslands places are doing; to compile information from organizations / areas trying to protect similar ecosystems and balance some degree of recreational use; also other disc golf courses.
- Admin recently informed Claire that no compiled feedback from villager input about the disc golf course issue (from July 2022 open house) will be sent out. He claims that no feedback on that subject was written down.
- Sorting / archiving photo records of disc golf course – on hold

#### **5. Lake Stewardship Committee**

- Bob has been in contact with several different organizations regarding how many lakes in Alberta are actually reservoirs, because lakes differ from reservoirs in several aspects, including sustainability of the shorelines / riparian areas (because of artificially changing water levels). He will update at the next NELS meeting.
- He has been taking photographs of the various winter activities on the ice this year. We discussed the idea of whether there are limits on summer or winter activities on the reservoir (e.g., how many boats can be moored on the lake? how many cars can be on the ice?), and whether there is a regulatory body related to this.
- If any NELS members have a special interest in lake stewardship and are interested in doing some related work, please speak to Bob.

#### **6. Date to discuss Climate Resilience and Adaptation Plan**

- Saturday, January 28/23 at 1 p.m.
- Please read the report (in particular the recommended actions) in preparation for the discussion.

#### **7. Other**

- Debby was not able to attend the meeting, but sent an e-mail with three ideas:
  - A summary of the Wildlife Biodiversity Zone in which SVGL is located. We discussed the possibility of creating an informal inventory of what has been seen (plants and animals) in the village. Sharon has photographs of what has been seen on her property, and possibly other villagers do as well.
  - A mention that we need to be diligent about ensuring that the wood chips we sometimes lay on our walking trails are not introducing any fungi, chemicals, etc. into those areas. She suggests that wood chips not be laid unless we can ensure they are from a local source and are not contaminated.
  - A suggestion that we look for alternatives to treated / preserved wood for constructing the boardwalk at the south end of the Fairy Trail. She suggests that we do not want to lay chemically treated items in a marshy area close to the lake.
- Tooney was not able to attend the meeting, but sent an e-mail containing useful comments about progress toward one of the Arkayla Springs related objectives in the NELS three-year plan.

**8. Next meeting: Wednesday, March 08, 2023**

Please mark your calendars.

- **Adjournment** - Meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

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Certified by the Secretary of the NELS Committee this 31st day of January 2023.

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Claire Huene