
Development of the Swale – Northeast Swale Working Group Update

Recommendation

That the report of the Acting General Manager, Community Services Department, dated March 11, 2019, be forwarded to Standing Policy Committee on Transportation, Standing Policy Committee on Environment, Utilities and Corporate Services, Saskatoon Environmental Advisory Committee, Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee, and City Council for information.

Topic and Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the progress the Northeast Swale Working Group has made towards addressing concerns raised regarding development around the Northeast Swale.

Report Highlights

1. The Northeast Swale Working Group (Swale Working Group) was established to assess, prioritize, and direct discussions regarding issues that have been raised relating to the Northeast Swale (Swale).
2. Nine issue-focused meetings were held to review and assess the various issues.
3. All issues raised have been reviewed by the group and have been addressed or have plans in place to address them.
4. The work of the group led to the coordination of a communication strategy regarding the Swale to coincide with the opening of Chief Mistawasis Bridge and associated roadways (North Commuter Parkway).

Strategic Goals

Existing and proposed measures to protect and enhance the Swale demonstrate the Strategic Goals of Environmental Leadership and Sustainable Growth.

Background

During its March 13, 2017 meeting, the Standing Policy Committee on Environment, Utilities and Corporate Services, in response to the Development of the Swale – Response to Northeast Swale Watchers' 12 Points, resolved in part:

- “3. That the Administration bring together stakeholders in regards to the Northeast Swale (Swale) to continue the discussion about protection of the Swale. Stakeholders should include, but are not limited to, the City of Saskatoon, University of Saskatchewan, Meewasin Valley Authority, Saskatoon Environmental Advisory Committee, Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee and the Swale Watchers. Stakeholders' composition does not need to come back

Development of the Swale – Northeast Swale Working Group Update

to Committee, but suggested starting points for initial discussion include integrated project management, long-term planning, financial implications, community engagement and communications.”

In addition, the Standing Policy Committee on Transportation recommended the following at its August 15, 2017 and September 11, 2017 meetings:

- “a) that the issue of the future of Lowe Road be referred to the Swale Stakeholder group and the Administration for report back; and
- b) that discussion about the speed limit on McOrmond Drive from Central Avenue to Wanuskewin Road be referred to the Northeast Swale stakeholder committee before the speed is determined.”

The following was also requested by City Council at its meeting on August 27, 2018:

- “8. That the Administration report to the Northeast Swale Watchers working group regarding what is being done for education and what types of signage is being considered including what opportunities for collaboration there will be with the Meewasin Valley Authority prior to the opening of the roadway with a follow-up report presented to the appropriate Standing Policy Committee.”

In response to Committee’s request to bring together stakeholders of the Swale and continue the discussion about protection of the Swale, Administration developed a framework for how this group would function. The group’s inaugural meeting took place Thursday, November 30, 2017, and the group confirmed the format and direction proposed by the Administration.

Report Working Group

Following the inaugural meeting of the Swale Working Group, Administration coordinated a process to facilitate discussion on each of the issues that Committee and Council requested be addressed. This involved extensive background research, engagement with relevant City of Saskatoon (City) staff, key stakeholders, and topic experts, as well as significant work to ensure the issues were summarized in a way that could allow for focused discussion at meetings that featured a diverse mix of people.

Throughout the process, over 300 hours of Long Range Planning staff time was used to coordinate this process and ensure the appropriate information and experts were available. In addition, significant staff time from technical experts from the Sustainability, Transportation, and Planning and Development divisions supported this initiative.

Issue-Focused Meetings

The process resulted in nine official meetings of the Swale Working Group. Issue specific meetings occurred to discuss six of these items, with others being addressed at general meetings. Overall, 34 individuals took part in the Swale Working Group meetings, representing City Administration, Meewasin, the University of Saskatchewan,

Development of the Swale – Northeast Swale Working Group Update

the Swale Watchers, and various other community groups. At these meetings, the issues falling under the following themes were discussed:

- a) Speed Limits and Traffic Calming;
- b) Wildlife Corridors and Crossings;
- c) Construction Management;
- d) Dark Sky Lighting;
- e) Stormwater Management;
- f) Lowe Road;
- g) Conservation of Biodiversity;
- h) Legal Protection of the Swale;
- i) Meewasin Funding;
- j) Swale Boundaries;
- k) Regional Connection; and
- l) Saskatoon Freeway.

Issues Addressed

The Swale Working Group discussions resulted in each of the issues raised being addressed either through an action item, the provision of information, or the identification of initiatives that are in the process of addressing the item. Attachment 1 provides a detailed summary of how each was, or is being addressed.

Highlights of the action items include:

1. Swale Boundaries
 - The coordination and review of a Request for Proposals for a Natural Area Screening for the University Heights Neighbourhood #3 (UH3) area (including the Small Swale). The Natural Areas Screening will provide a robust assessment of the existing flora and fauna in the UH3 area. The results will inform further discussions regarding the north boundaries of the Swale.
2. Dark Sky Lighting
 - An assessment of the street light fixtures installed in and around the Swale occurred, and resulted in adjustment to a number of the light fixtures, to ensure proper angles and compliance with Dark Sky Lighting standards.
3. Wildlife Corridors and Crossings
 - A collaborative project that includes representatives of the City, Meewasin, and the University of Saskatchewan was initiated to monitor animal movements in the Swale area. This is expected to be an ongoing project coordinated by Meewasin.
4. Speed Limits and Traffic Calming
 - A proposal of a speed limit of 60 km/h for the area northwest of Central Avenue on McOrmond Drive as part of Transportation's annual Traffic Bylaw Speed Limits Update Report.

Development of the Swale – Northeast Swale Working Group Update

- Direction regarding the design of signage needs for the section of McOrmond Drive that crosses the Swale. This signage has now been installed.
5. Lowe Road
- A proposal for a temporary closure of Lowe Road to limit shortcutting through the Swale from Fedoruk Road to McOrmond Drive.

For a number of the issues, the means of addressing the issue was through information sharing. A number of the issues raised had already been addressed by the City, or appeared to be based on a lack of awareness or communication of existing information or processes. Some issues were already in the process of being addressed through existing initiatives, among them being the Green Infrastructure Strategy. The Swale Working Group's process provided an opportunity to clarify details on each of the issues. Additionally, a new webpage was added to the City's website that included specific information on the Swale. The Meewasin website also now contains a more comprehensive page on the Swale. These pages are expected to be kept up to date, which will ensure the public has easier access to information on the Swale and the policies and initiatives that have an influence on it.

North Commuter Parkway Communication Strategy

Discussions that occurred as part of the Swale Working Group resulted in the coordination of a communications strategy regarding the importance of the Swale, and the work done by the City to conserve it, that coincided with the opening of the North Commuter Parkway and the Chief Mistawasis Bridge (see Attachment 2 for a summary of this initiative).

Public and/or Stakeholder Involvement

Representatives from Meewasin, the Swale Watchers, the University of Saskatchewan, and the City are included in the Swale Working Group, as an ad-hoc committee. Additional stakeholders and experts have been included as needed for issue specific discussions.

Communication Plan

In addition to information of the City's and Meewasin's websites, each representative in the Swale Working Group has been asked to report back to the group(s) they represent.

Financial Implications

Costs associated with this project were borne out of existing operating-funded staffing budgets.

Other Considerations/Implications

There are no policy, environmental, privacy, or CPTED implications or considerations.

Development of the Swale – Northeast Swale Working Group Update

Due Date for Follow-up and/or Project Completion

The Swale Working Group will continue to exist on an as needed basis with information being shared or meetings occurring in 2019 regarding Swale Boundaries, Legal Protection, Stormwater Management, and Construction Management. Once these issues have been addressed, the intent is for the group to be dissolved.

Public Notice

Public Notice pursuant to Section 3 of Policy No. C01-021, Public Notice Policy, is not required.

Attachments

1. Northeast Swale Working Group Issue Actions Summary
2. North Commuter Parkway Opening - Communications Strategy Summary

Report Approval

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SP/2019/PL/PDCS – Northeast Swale Working Group Update/df