

STAFF REPORT TO COUNCIL

FROM Sherri Walden, Director of Parks, Recreation & Culture
DATE April 1, 2019
REPORT PRC-02-19
SUBJECT Trails – Safety Meeting Follow-up and Action Plan

RECOMMENDATION

That Report PRC-02-19 Trails – Safety Meeting Follow-up and Action Plan, be received for council's information.

BACKGROUND

During the fall of 2018, social media posts by the Town prompted community replies regarding concerns with trail safety. In discussions with Chief Chris Knoll, it was determined a community information and input session regarding this topic would be beneficial.

In partnership with Hanover Library, a 'Conversation about Trail Safety' was held on February 28, 2019. In addition to providing trails development, maintenance and police related background, the session provided attendees the opportunity to provide input into identifying solutions that could be further investigated.

The meeting was attended by approximately 50 residents and several council members. The majority of attendees indicated they regularly utilize the trail with 14 indicating daily and 25 weekly use. There was good representation from individuals who typically used specific sections of the trail with 15 regularly on the south line section and 20 using the grove/soccer/County Road 28 section. The entire trail was regularly used by 12 of those in attendance and 11 indicated being on the secondary trails regularly. The majority of individuals utilized the trails during daytime hours on weekdays and weekends.

DISCUSSION

Attendees provided verbal or written input on two discussion topics:

1. Safety concerns when using the trails and the specific trail areas that the concern pertained to. Most input related to a general sense of not feeling safe with some individuals being encountered when using the trail and misuse of areas off the main trail for fires, transient camping and the garbage and materials left behind. The Grove to Big Black bridge and secondary trails adjacent to the soccer fields were noted as areas of concern. Other notes included trail etiquette items related to off leash dogs, bicycles and hunting.
2. Suggestions, solutions, ideas or strategies that would contribute to improving the feeling of safety when using the trails. Regular police presence and ability to patrol with bikes or other equipment (e.g., ATV, drone), resident volunteer 'trails eyes and ears', solar lighting, private property owner education, security cameras, and a strategy to deal with broader societal issues were noted as suggestions.

All input has been considered and discussed further with Chief Knoll. The following are action items that we believe can be implemented in 2019 to enhance the sense of trail safety.

1. Patrol of Trails by Police Services

Hanover Police Service will dedicate 12 hours per month from May 15 to September 15 to patrol of the main trails and secondary trails.

Three 4 hour directed patrols will be scheduled at various days and times depending on community needs. The estimated additional costs of the trail patrol will be allocated within the current patrol overtime budget projections.

The Hanover Police Service will seek community sponsorships starting with local service clubs to assist with offsetting the costs to purchase the patrol bicycles and related equipment. The Service is also currently in the process of identifying the training requirements needed for the assigned officers who will conduct the patrol work.

2. Trails 'Eyes and Ears' Volunteers

The Parks, Recreation & Culture Department will seek individuals who regularly use the trail and who would be willing to wear identifiable clothing when out on the trails. Volunteers would attend a pre and post season meeting and require a police background check to be completed. The Hanover Police Service will complete background checks at no cost for these volunteers. Their role would be to note any concerns and contact Parks, Recreation & Culture or the police. The regular 'eyes and ears' and identifiable presence on the trail will assist in enhancing a sense of safety. During and after the meeting, a number of individuals indicated an interest in being involved.

3. Trail Markers

Trail marker signage will be installed at regular intervals along the trail as reference for occurrences. The marker will include a number and reference to note the number when contacting emergency services or the municipality regarding safety or maintenance concerns. Emergency services will be provided with a map to indicate the location of the markers to determine the location of an issue or individual. Trail markers are an approved 2019 budget item.

Creating awareness of these strategies will include a press release and launch of the volunteer initiative in May. Social media will also be used to share trails use and etiquette reminders.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The dedicated trail police patrol hours is estimated to cost \$3,600 and will be allocated within current patrol overtime budget projections.

The cost of the purchase of bike patrol equipment is estimated at \$7,000; however, the Hanover Police Service is preparing proposals in an attempt to raise these funds through community donations starting with our local service clubs. Any community donations received towards this project will limit the financial impacts on our current police budget since these items were not projected for this budget year.

The volunteer initiative will require the purchase of vests or other clothing to identify the individuals involved and perhaps an appreciation event in September. It is anticipated this cost would be \$500 – \$750 which will be managed within current budget projections.

Trail marker signage has been approved in the 2019 capital budget with \$15,000 as the projected expense.

LINK TO STRATEGIC PLAN

This report supports the indicated Strategic Directions and Goals of the Town of Hanover.

Strategic Direction #1: Regional Centre

Goal: To enhance and strengthen Hanover's position as a regional centre while creating stronger working relationships with neighbouring municipalities and service providers for our mutual benefit.

Strategic Direction #2: Economic Development

Goal: To create an environment that supports economic diversification and a broader range of attractive employment opportunities to retain existing residents and businesses and attract investment and new families to the community.

Strategic Direction #3: Community

Goal: To support initiatives that contribute to healthier residents, more active and rewarding lifestyles and a safer community.

Strategic Direction #4: Sustainable Municipal Operations

Goal: To improve financial and operational aspects of the Town for the continued maintenance, rehabilitation and reconstruction of its infrastructure and to sustain and enhance current municipal programs and services.

Respectfully submitted,

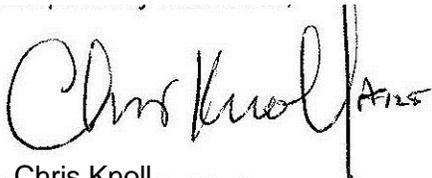


Sherri Walden
Director of Parks, Recreation & Culture

Concurrence,



Brian Tocheri
CAO/Clerk



Chris Knoll,
Police Chief

1. How frequently do you utilize the trails? When do you use the trails? What section or area of trails do you utilize most regularly?

Approximately 50 attendees at the meeting who indicated frequency of use as follows:

- Daily – 14
- Weekly – 25
- Monthly – 3
- Occasionally – 3
- Do not use – 1

Area of trails used most regularly by attendees included:

- South Line – 15
- Grove | Soccer | County Road 28
 - a) Grove to soccer - 11
 - b) Soccer to County Road 28 – 9
- Entire trail – 12
- Secondary trail areas – 11

Attendees indicated using the trails as follows:

- Weekday daytime – 24
- Weekday evening – 21
- Weekend daytime– 40
- Weekend evening– 17

2. Discussion Topic 1

Do you have concerns related to safety when using the trails?

What are those concerns?

Are there specific areas along the trail that you have safety concerns?

a) Trail Section - Grove | Soccer | County Road 28

Soccer to 7th Avenue segment

- Evidence of transient campsites
- Garbage and materials from transient areas
- Big Black Bridge to Little Black Bridge noted as area that cross paths with other individuals who make others feel uneasy or who have had negative verbal interactions with individuals

Soccer to County Road 28 segment

- Residents who live near trail have had thefts
- Weekend people traffic to this area
- Campfires on secondary trail areas
- Motorized vehicles on trails
- Evidence of transient campsites
- Garbage and materials from transient areas
- 2017 first noted for transient campsites and garbage, etc. left behind from people misuse

b) Trail Section – Southline

- Sense of not feeling safe when using trail with some people encounter
- Dogs off leash
- Hunters on trail during hunting season
- No exit available past 7th Street access

c) General

- Trees, plant material along trail is very close to trail in some areas
- General sense of not feeling safe when using the trail
- Trail Etiquette – bikers not giving warning to walkers, off leash dogs

3. Discussion Topic 2

What suggestions, solutions, ideas or strategies do you have that would contribute to improving your sense of feeling of safety when using the trails?

a) Police

- Increased presence, regular patrols
- Equipment to allow for increased presence – bike, drone, ATV
- Partners to assist with equipment purchase

b) Citizen Volunteer Group to Patrol Trails

- Citizens on patrol
- Include service clubs
- Safety in numbers
- Cambridge initiative referenced
- Communication or message option – allows people to connect with others who want to walk / bike the trail

c) Solar Lights

- Mixed input as lights may contribute to unwanted after hours use

d) Private Property Owners

- Education, awareness as some noted concerns not on Town property
- Absentee property owners
- Property enhancements – trim trees

e) Security cameras – at identified problem areas

f) Broader Social Issue (mental health, transient individuals)

- Signage or contacts on trail who can provide help
- 211 signage
- Assistance / information so don't turn to areas at or near trails

g) Other

- Bylaw enforcement in dog park area (off leash dogs)
- Secondary trails boardwalk repairs
- Plow parking area at Wilken Park in Winter