

Council given results on resident survey for Fiddle Park

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Skating paths, trails, a dog park, and a toboggan hill. Shelburne Town council has heard the thoughts of residents on what they would like to see happen at Fiddle Park.

During their meeting on Monday (Nov. 22), Shelburne Town council received a report from town planner Steve Wever with details on the Fiddle Park Master Plan, including the results of a community survey.

The Town of Shelburne received nearly 500 responses to their Fiddle Park Master Plan survey, which launched on Sept. 13 and ran until Oct. 11, with the majority of respondents from Shelburne at 83 per cent. Of the respondents, 60 per cent said they visited Fiddle Park for one or more events throughout the year. Based on the survey the top desired elements for Fiddle Park are trails (257 responses) and skating paths (251).

From the survey Town staff created a vision for the Fiddle Park upgrades, which reads, "Fiddle Park will be reimagined to benefit the entire community, creating spaces where people can connect with one another, share experiences, and enjoy the natural environment of the park."

Guiding principles for upgrades to the park included designing it for community level usages, having flexibility in the design of the space, maintaining the natural setting, design for four season usages, and universal accessibility.

Fiddle Park is the largest park property in the town of Shelburne with a total of 114.5 acres, and 83.5 acres of it being protected natural heritage, as well as 31 acres of usable land.

Denyse Morrissey, chief administrative officer, said when the sale of the park was not supported it was indicated that council wanted to see the park evolve into something the community would embrace and use and would have open spaces for multipurpose use including continuous events.

"We would hope every member of the community would recognize where it is, and be there more than once a year, potentially," said Morrissey.

Following the report, Coun. Walter Benotto questioned whether service clubs in the community had been contacted about their thoughts as they have a past history to the park.

Wever said they are planning to have more focused consultation through interview and focus groups with a number of stakeholders including service clubs.

Mayor Wade Mills noted that as part of the strategic plan, council discussed a parks and recreation taskforce made primarily up of members from various service clubs.

"I've talked with staff a couple of times about that and I think Jennifer [Willoughby] has sent out an invite to the service clubs already. The plan is, I think I'll be sitting down with representatives of each of those clubs early in December," said Mills, adding his agreement in needing to speak with the various service clubs.

As part of designing Fiddle Park for level community usage, the report indicated the phasing out of camping, which was previously a main usage of the park in cases of tourism events.

Deputy Mayor Anderson added that he believes the park needs the new vision to modernize and provide amenities the community is asking for.

Morrissey concluded that four season usage, with an emphasize on winter usage, is critical and will be brought to council in the budget framework and draft 2022 budget to help bring amenities that will be ?quick wins?.

The next step in the Fiddle Park Master Plan is a draft park concept for community feedback expected in December.