

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE NIAGARA PARKS  
COMMISSION, SCHOOL OF HORTICULTURE, 2565 NIAGARA  
PARKWAY, NIAGARA FALLS, ONTARIO – FRIDAY FEBRUARY  
17, 2017 AT 10:00 AM**

**1. MEMBERS PRESENT**

Janice Thomson, Joan Andrew, Lois Giles, Wayne Redekop, Jim Diodati,  
Vince Kerrio, Pat Darte,  
Regrets from Ian Nielsen-Jones, James Detenbeck, Kerry Pond

Ms. Thomson was in the Chair and Mr. Reegan McCullough acted as Secretary to the meeting. The following staff members were present to report and answer questions on the agenda items: D. Adames, M. Neubauer, D. Gibbs, C. Scott, M. Gruosso, and S. Barnhart.

**2. CHAIR THOMSON'S  
OPENING REMARKS**

Since our December meeting, the NPC has hosted a successful New Year's Eve concert and, with the mild winter, had an opportunity to conduct a wide range of maintenance throughout the park.

Our annual report for the year ending March 2016 was tabled in the legislature and I would once again like to recognize the efforts of all commissioners and staff who worked together to achieve our positive results. This report is the first time in ten years that the NPC has seen such positive revenue and net results, with self generated income exceeding 97 million dollars and bottom line in excess of 5.8 million dollars. These funds have been invested in deferred maintenance projects and new capital investments that will ensure sustainability of NPC operations in future.

We are just one month away from the 2016-17 year- end at March 31 and forecasts indicate we will once again set new records in terms of revenue, capital investment and visitor attendance.

These results do not happen by chance and are the direct result of many positive adjustments made to NPC's oversight structure, staff development and attention to customer service. The positive travel trends over the past two years have been contributors and the NPC's enhanced abilities to identify market opportunities and deliver on our mandate have never been stronger. Thank you to each Commissioner for investing hundreds of hours every year preparing for our meetings and for bringing your individual, varied professional expertise to this Board. And thank you to the senior management team who lead their individual departments with professionalism and integrity, in an energized environment of continued growth and excellence.

**2. CONT'D**

We have received notification of Chief Scott's retirement date and while we are sorry that he is leaving us, we understand his motivation to complete his successful, long career of public safety service and we will wish him well in a more formal way closer to his retirement date. A search process to appoint our next Chief will commence shortly.

NPC continues to amaze me and there is nothing more refreshing than the annual press release in late January indicating that the Spring floral display is open at the Floral Showhouse. Another season of beautiful floral displays has been launched and we invite everyone who needs reassurance that spring is just around the corner to stop by the Floral Showhouse.

Thank you to the members of the public who have joined us today. As always, we appreciate your continued interest, support and input.

**3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

*The agenda was presented for approval  
Moved by: Vice Chair Andrew  
Seconded by: Commissioner Kerrio  
That the agenda be approved as presented.  
Carried.*

**5. MINUTES OF  
DECEMBER 16, 2016**

*The minutes were presented for approval.  
Moved by: Commissioner Dart  
Seconded by: Vice Chair Andrew  
That the minutes of December 16, 2016 be approved as presented.  
Carried.*

**6. PRESENTATION RE:  
FAMOUS VISITORS TO  
NIAGARA FALLS**

Chair Thomson introduced Sherman Zavitz, official historian for the City of Niagara Falls. Mr. Zavitz presented an interesting collection of stories about many famous visitors to Niagara Parks over the years including Charles Dickens, Oscar Wilde and Winston Churchill.

**7. PRESENTATION RE:**

**MACKENZIE PRINTERY  
NEWSPAPER MUSEUM  
GROUP**

Chair Thomson introduced Mr. Ron Schroder, Chairman of the Mackenzie Printery & Newspaper Museum Group. Mr. Schroder presented interesting facts on Canada's only working printing museum including information on the various press models at the museum available for public demonstration. Mr. Schroder highlighted the cooperative working partnership between NPC staff and the artifacts, materials, maintenance and instruction group at Mackenzie Printery.

**8. BUSINESS HIGHLIGHTS**

Mr. McCullough provided an overview of the pre-circulated report. Mr. McCullough spoke of the following items:

- Members of the Heritage team will be assisting with the archives at Oak Hall as they move to a temporary home at Old Fort Erie.
- Culinary Services Managers and Chefs completed menu engineering in January to analyze menus from 2016 for popularity and profitability in preparation for 2017 menus.
- The new 70-foot reach bucket truck replaced our 19-year-old truck and provides an additional 15 feet of reach. The existing bucket will be retained for shared use park wide and as a back-up unit when the new one is in for service.
- The 10-year-old Bandit chipper has reached its replacement life cycle. The current unit has several critical systems which are at a point of soon needing major reconstruction. The new Morbark chipper can process up to a 21-inch diameter log. This is an additional 3 inches of chipping capacity which will help to build on our plan of processing as many trees as we can on site as opposed to hauling unprocessed logs away. This in turn reduces the need to cut material into smaller pieces, handle brush by hand and reduces the time it takes to rake and clean up processing areas.
- Emerald Ash tree removals and clean up are continuing at Legends on the Niagara and Whirlpool.
- Agronomy staff recently attended the Ontario Golf Course Superintendents Association conference at the Scotiabank Convention Center. The educational sessions provided training on industry best practices and specialized workshops for optimal turf, playing conditions and environmental initiatives.

## 8. CONT'D

- Human Resources staff assisted the Parks Department in restructuring of department resources to strengthen the operation and gain efficiencies.
- A Quarterly meeting was held with OPSEU Park Employees.
- Employee Survey Meetings were completed with all departments and the development of action plans is underway.
- Staff attended a number of meetings as part of the Safety Group Advantage Program (SGAP).
- The Laura Secord Homestead was selected by the National Ballet of Canada as one of their '150 Pointes'. A pointe shoe arrived at the Homestead as a part of the Ballet's contribution to Canada 150.
- As a Member of the National Association of Landscape Professionals, the School of Horticulture Assistant Superintendent was invited to represent the NPC School of Horticulture and participate as a Panel Member of the Reaccreditation for SUNY Cobleskill (Cobleskill, NY). The School of Horticulture is the only college in Canada to have its diploma recognized as an accredited four-year Bachelor Degree by members of the National Association of Landscape Professionals. The designation is significant because it increases the awareness and prestige of the School in comparison to other horticulture colleges and universities across North America.
- Continued to implement the Niagara River Coastal Wetland Restoration Project in collaboration with the MNRF. Engineered drawings have been finalized and received. Procurement of a contractor for implementation is underway with work to be completed by March 15, 2017. Letters to adjacent landowners were distributed. NPC Staff met on-site with one landowner to discuss project.
- Sales Staff attended the following:
  - January 14-18 - American Bus Association, Cleveland, OH
  - February 1-3 - Canadian Society of Association Executives Tête-à-Tête Trade Show, Ottawa, ON

## 8. CONT'D

- Heritage staff are now working with Past Perfect for artifacts and artwork as well as the introduction of Skype tour previews for teachers.
- Capital improvements completed at Elements on the Falls restaurant, including new carpet, new kitchen floor and refresh of washrooms. These projects are for Health and Safety, improved image as well as increased seating capacity which will have a positive financial impact.
- Trail counter data continues to be collected from the Niagara Glen stairs. A total of 5,228 visitors used the trails between December 2016 and January 2017. Total visitation to the Niagara Glen in 2016 was 130,735 compared to 108,844 in 2015 an increase of 20%.
- The Butterfly Conservatory annual maintenance shutdown was completed on time. Further repair and renovation of upper pathway was completed addressing water drainage.
- Accessible doors, with appropriate widths and automatic door openers, were installed at the main entrance of the Victoria Park Gift Shop and in Presentation Rooms A and B at the Butterfly Conservatory.
- Upgrades to Presentation Room B at the Butterfly Conservatory were completed mid-December. The new audio/video system enhances the visitor experience with the highly informative introductory video
- Work continued on the set up and implementation of the new Payroll/Time and Attendance/Human Resources system. Training sessions were held for Managers and Supervisors from January 9-24. A number of communications have been issued to staff to keep them informed about the product features and implementation time frames.

## 8. CONT'D

- Records and Information Management staff completed initial interviews and records inventories with staff to prepare a function-based records retention schedule and destruction authority; this policy was approved and lays the groundwork to begin implementing the records management framework into the regular course of business.
- Work is underway to begin records destruction in those departments where records have been identified as eligible for destruction.
- Work has begun on EDRMS (Electronic Document and Records Management System) specifications and functional requirements.
- Two Records Management workshops have been completed in 2017, with a view to delving deeper into the process mapping of each business function for the purposes of creating a classification schema reflective of the work done in each area.
- Records and Information Management staff removed the archives from the basement of Oak Hall and re-located the material to Old Fort Erie. The material is being inventoried, including a basic preservation assessment.
- To improve network performance and reliability, 'Cogeco for Business' will be implemented at Old Fort Erie in February. This network improvement will provide larger bandwidth for email, data, building alarms and CCTV surveillance.
- The School of Horticulture and Butterfly Café have been connected with a short fiber run by repairing an existing conduit between the two sites. This will provide a more reliable network connection to the School of Horticulture and enable the decommissioning of an old set of point to point radios that are no longer supported.
- NPC's main file server was replaced in February to provide improved access and meet NPC's new server operating system standard of Windows 2012.
- Overall, Culinary Services continues to record an increase in revenue as compared to budget plan. For January, due to capital improvements, Elements on the Falls restaurant closed from January 9 – 30, 2017 with Queen Victoria Place restaurant open to service pre-booked groups.

## 8. CONT'D

- Procurement Activity from Nov 29 through Jan 27, 2017 – there were 87 procurement projects valued at approximately \$3.24 million facilitated by the Procurement division.
- Working through the Ministry, Heritage is now offering brief Skype tours for educators. These short visits are a glimpse of Niagara Parks Commission offerings.
- Legends on the Niagara and Whirlpool golf courses are handling the winter well. To date, there are no issues with regards to the turf. It is anticipated that a standard opening date will occur in early April at both golf courses.
- The Legends on the Niagara winter indoor golf academy is fully operational, providing a full range of services seven days a week. Services include indoor practice combined with coaching utilizing the swing analysis recorders. The golf simulator is available to rent on an hourly basis with a selection of 30 golf courses to play
- Winter maintenance continues throughout the Parks. As well, Forestry staff have commenced pruning for hazards and equipment clearances in the Queenston Heights Park area.
- The additional crew to the Forestry department provides for two distinct teams:
  - Removal and Project team: This team will be responsible for the majority of tree removals throughout the NPC. At this time, they are focused on the Emerald Ash Borer removals.
  - Pruning and Maintenance team: This team will focus on the management of our living urban forest with emphasis on structural pruning for safety starting in the highest trafficked areas of the park and the pruning for health and esthetics of our trees.

## 8. CONT'D

- The Canadian Raptor Conservancy was the successful proponent to the “Live Raptor Bird” display which will complement the ROM Northern Owl Exhibit set to launch February 13, 2017. The live birds and demonstrations are scheduled for Saturdays and key holiday dates starting Family Day weekend through to April 23, 2017.
- In honour of Heritage Month and to support our coworkers at Table Rock, staff will be on hand at Table Rock through the long weekend of February, March Break and Easter. NPC will be commemorating all things Canada.
- Culinary Services with Wedding and Social Sales hosted the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual NPC Wedding Show at Legends on the Niagara on January 28, 2017
- Wedding and Social Sales with Marketing produced a new Wedding booklet highlighting NPC’s Wedding Ceremony and Receptions Venues. The book represents a new and refreshed look for Niagara Parks Wedding locations
- The School of Horticulture students came second place after participating in the “Come Alive Outside” Design Challenge supported by Landscape Ontario in October 2016. This community based program working with student ages is a significant contributor to the promotion of the School of Horticulture program.
- NPC Staff and students participated in the Industry Trade Show and Congress for Landscape Ontario on January 9-11, 2017. To further promote the school in an increasingly competitive market, the School of Horticulture for the first time constructed a planted exhibit within the tradeshow.
- December 12 - Niagara Parks hosted 35 high school students from Sapporo, Japan, who were in Niagara to complete a Brock University Customized English Language Program.



**8. CONT'D**

- January 12 - NPC was pleased to host a visit by the Deputy Director and Director of Legislative Affairs and Policy Research, for the Mount Taishan Scenic Area Management Committee. Mount Tai is considered a mountain of historical and cultural significance in China, and was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1987. A presentation on NPC's responsibilities and operations was provided by NPC Chair Janice Thomson and CEO Reegan McCullough, followed by a tour of NPC's Table Rock Complex and Journey Behind the Falls attraction. In the fall of 2015, Chair Thomson and the Director of the Mount Taishan Scenic Area Management Committee formalized a Memorandum of Understanding between both organizations aimed at the possible establishment of a sister park relationship between the two popular natural tourism attractions.

**9. SUMMARY OF DECISIONS  
FROM DECEMBER 16, 2016  
& JANUARY 20, 2017**

Mr. McCullough presented the pre-circulated report for the Commission's information.

**10. OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business to discuss.

**11. QUESTIONS FROM THE  
PUBLIC**

Chair Thomson asked if members of the public had any questions and no questions were asked.

**12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting will be Friday April 21, 2017 at 10 a.m.

**13. RESOLUTION TO MOVE TO  
CLOSED SESSION**

*Moved by: Commissioner Darte*

*Seconded by: Commissioner Giles*

*That the meeting move into the closed session at 11 a.m. Carried.*