

## Issues Committee Report June 2020

The Issues Committee has been working on these main areas.

**1. The draft Municipal Development Plan**, which will affect municipal planning and decisions for the next 30 years, is on the City website. The issues committee is (distance) meeting to discuss the plan and will meet with the Planning Superintendent in June to ask questions. Here is the **link to the myMH Master Plan website** with all of the content (<https://shapeyourcity.medicinehat.ca/municipal-development-plan>). GN members are encouraged to check out the series of YouTube videos as they provide a good overview of each section. New videos are released every few days. **Members Note:** The City is currently seeking feedback on the plan through their survey on the website (open until June 25th). Additionally, as a stakeholder group we can submit a letter outlining our position, either this month or at the statutory public hearing (or both). The statutory public hearing for the plan is **tentatively scheduled for September 8th, 2020**.

**2. Grasslands Conservation and Invasive Weed Control** in Echo Dale, Burnside, Ranchlands, Briar Run (FLC), and Dunmore wind farm. Invasive species abound in Medicine Hat and many have been identified and reported through the 'EDDMapS' app. A huge thanks goes to Gerry Ehlert for his focus on this issue and the support he gets from John S. and Hugh. I am particularly pleased that Grasslands Naturalists has produced a "Case for Conserving Native Grasslands and Riparian Areas", and three documents that celebrate flora and fauna in Medicine Hat Area (butterflies, wildflowers and birds) which we can use to back up any conversation about the need to conserve and restore.

**3. Echo Dale Regional Park Future upgrade.** (from Gerry Ehlert) GN is a stakeholder for the drafting of the Echo Dale Regional Park Future Plan. Recently we completed our final zoom stakeholder meeting and on-line survey with the consultants. The consultants provided two future plan concepts to look at and provide feedback. Both concepts proposed a variety of recreation improvements and new developments, including RV camping and a big event program. In summary, GN recommended that the future park should be protective of the native grasslands and riparian areas so these areas receive a minimum amount of disturbance and development. Subject to a feasibility study, we supported an enhanced interpretive program; enhanced family recreation developments in the area of swimming lake and fishing/boating lake; fenced dog park (3 areas); improved access for motorized and non-motorized boats/canoes; and a small tenting/small RV area in the east crested wheatgrass flats area. The consultants will take all our comments and make recommendations to the City. The City will undertake a costing of the proposed concept and then provide citizens with a finalized future plan and an opportunity to comment on-line very soon.. GN provided the consultants with our recent document a "Case for Protecting Native Grasslands and Riparian Areas".

**4. Mountain Bike Trail.** During the process of Echo Dale Regional Park planning, we became aware of the plans to develop a series of mountain bike trails in the Echo Dale Regional Park and the area east to the Gas City campground. These trails have been discussed in various planning assessments and planning documents for several years now. For example, Medicine Hat Trail Development Plan 2018, South Saskatchewan River Recreation & Leisure Opportunities 2015, and City of Medicine Hat Recreation Master Plan 2011. GN is in the process of catch-up and meeting with City Parks and Recreation, and the 670 Collective Mountain Bike Club to better understand and have input to the location and implementation of trails. Some of these proposed trails are existing trails while others are new trails. The 670 has received a copy of our protecting native grasslands and riparian areas document.

**5. Location of recreational infrastructure.** Some residents of CH have expressed concern over construction on an area on 8th Street NE across from McCoy HS and St. Francis X. The skateboard project was approved by Parks and Rec last year. Citizens wrote to the mayor and councilors and met with one councilor. GN talked with Parks and Rec. The project is too far along to influence location now. Perhaps what GN can do is to offer opportunities for the skateboarders and their mentors to learn about stewardship of grasslands and riparian areas. Perhaps they could be involved in clean up of the areas around their skateboard parks; GN could offer to work with them so appreciation of flora and fauna and geo-science can grow among active youth.

**5. Networking.** Participating in activities and discussions with others provides an opportunity to network with a broader community about nature, and local and global environment effects of our routines and decisions. Three Issues Committee members are also part of the **SEAWA Communications Committee** and the local chapter of the

**Council of Canadians.** Also, from attendance of the weekly **Fridays-at-Four Climate Conversations** grew an attempt to provide a hub/store/or something that would support **Sustainable Solutions**. The seed has been planted. At the bi-annual **“Moving and Choosing”** Networking meetings (AHS), Martha reminds leaders that the schools and groups they work with could go on Nature Walks (with wildflower brochure and birding guide in hand) to help with the “Moving” part of their healthy living mandate.

**6.** Members who wish to pursue an issue should contact the Issues Committee, and we will work with you. The issues are many, and we can only work on the ones for which there are volunteers to work with us.

Martha Munz Gue and John Slater, co-facilitators of the Issues Committee