

## Jim Wright, speaking for the Garden City Conservation Society

Councillor Steves and committee,

I've spent lots of time reviewing the revised concept for enhancing the Garden City Lands. It is much improved.

I should mention here that I'm taking the broad perspective of the community who saved the lands by rising up to *conserve* the lands for **ALR values**.

The statements of goals and principles in the report are mostly excellent. The ideas fair and open house that are described were mostly excellent too. As always, the images look attractive.

Those strengths helped free me to focus on the key question on behalf of the community: Can we be confident that the lands will be **stewarded** as an **ALR** park for ALR uses for *community wellness*?

*Stewardship* involves strong values. In this case, they would be strong **ALR** values along with clear commitment to community wellness. (So I looked for that.)

Stewardship also involves down-to-earth practicality. So I looked for signs of practical thinking for the range of ALR uses: agricultural, ecological and related open-land recreation.

Unfortunately, I still see ALR **evasion**. For instance, changing the Community Fields label enabled *deniability*, but that's all. Under the new labels of "Event Field" and "The Commons," the Community Fields for contra-ALR uses are even larger.

Of course that's deniable, but as *grass* fields they'd just be tourist destinations—for snow geese. That happens to be okay with me, but are we really aiming for edible airports?

Let's move on. For both agriculture and bog conservation, the trails will typically need to serve water management roles. That's the logical way to separate the acidic water for bog restoration from agricultural water (usually alkaline). And water-level management is needed for *everything*. But there are something like 35 trail illustrations, and I noticed *none* that obviously serve that purpose. Most of them obviously do *not*.

Basic *hydrology* thinking for water management was to be part of Phase 1 in the six phases, but there's no sign of it.

Finishing phase 1 would also involve going out on the lands with an expert guide like Michael Wolfe to see the effect of invasive species. But the revised concept describes *Scotch heather* almost as though it's good, when it is actually a fast-advancing *invader*. In effect, it is strangling the sphagnum bog ecosystem. That's becoming another lost legacy. It's not ALR park stewardship.

Getting back to the trails, there's consensus on the importance of the *perimeter* trail. It's needed for community access and hydrology, but first of all it is an **ALR farm road** (for service vehicles). With **ALR-park thinking**, that would be brought out in the concept. (It isn't.)

For community wellness, the lands would be **accessible**, starting with that perimeter trail. Incredibly, nothing in the words or images shows design to enable mobility scooters, walkers and wheelchairs. It's just more of the disregard for ordinary people that has lost us the viewscape legacy. That is sad.

The concept is full of nice sentiments. We now need a *practical* plan for an authentic ALR park.

We have capable decent people on staff. Let's get rid of the contra-ALR millstone around their neck. Let them plan how to *steward* the **ALR** park and **save** natural legacies for community wellness.