

GCCS Comments on GCL Phase Two Concept Plan Options

As usual, I'm Jim Wright. I'm speaking for the **board** of the Garden City Conservation Society about the Concept Plans.

Our directors were pleased that **ALR commitment** was evident. Unfortunately, I've just learned that the "Community fields" label in the plans means "five soccer fields," which is not an ALR use.

The stated elements seem fine. So in the big picture the park planning was promising, and we intended to commend the team.

Some concerns did come up when we got to the illustrated set of options. As always, we aim to help **steward** our central park as ALR parkland for agriculture, recreation and conservation for community wellness. That means doing our part to **enable informed choices**.

For a start, we urge a visual presentation that makes information easy to grasp on a computer screen. With my large screen and computer glasses, the text explanations are illegible in the largest window where a whole page fits. That's after I rotate it, which some people can't do. It takes all my effort to make out what it says, and that stops me from thinking about the concepts at the same time. Decoding the *maps* is even harder, starting with trying to see the numbers on the maps. Simple things, big impact.

The colourful artwork for the concepts will prompt a **wow** factor, an instant reaction that gets people feeling warm and fuzzy. It was great that the excellent Ideas Fair accomplished that; in this phase, let's enable **every** web visitor who wants to make informed choices to take in the info easily.

Yvonne Stich has just told me she's addressing the problem. I suggest that the public consultation not start until the problem is solved.

Secondly, we're glad to see an effort to bring in what the **nature** of the lands is telling us. However, we're aware that the concepts could have gone further that way by drawing on **readily available knowledge**. We were sorry to have to look for least bad options instead of best ones.

As an example, I know from top local experts that the northwest berm of clean soil fill is well suited to orchards (after obvious kinds of preparation). That was one of the points the biophysical inventory consultants missed, and we guess the concepts reflect that, but local Conservation Society expertise would have caught it instantly.

We *don't* want to **impose** our help, and we have *made known* that it's available. It *would* enable optimal results and *might* cut the timeline in half. We *will* continue to help, and the impact will be greater if we're helping the park team more *directly*.

To see how that works, let's look at the parallel example. The scene is the Grauer Lands at Sturgeon Bank on a sunny mid-August day. My wife and I are cycling south on the west dike when we see backhoes on the bank. What??? There are five of them, destroying the array of driftwood logs from the highest tides of scores of years. "Port Metro!" I say. "They're destroying our ecosystem—the habitat! And the viewscapes!" Then a sign credits the City of Richmond, so I despair.

Later, here at parks committee, I learned that not even the chair was told about it. (And logs are **not** mentioned in the *Management Plan for Grauer Property* of June 2012.) A natural legacy is gone. Even if the new plan is **better**, bringing in the local knowledge early on would have cut the risk. Normally I'd be out on the west dike all the time. Ever since we came across that August scene, I can't face it, not even once.

That's the difference when informed local input is left out.