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The Corporation of the County of Northumberland Vegetation Management Advisory Committee Minutes

Tuesday June 22, 2021, 1:00pm
Virtual Meeting – Zoom Conference

Members Present:

- Denise Marshall (County)
 - Mike Muldoon (County)
 - Councillor Bill Cane (Chair)
 - Councillor Mandy Martin
 - Mark DeJong (Northumberland Federation of Agriculture)
 - Gigi Ludorf-Weaver (Sustainable Cobourg / Blue Dot Rep. / Vice Chair)
 - Georgina Brouwer (Director, Willow Beach Field Naturalists)
-

1. Call to Order

Chair Bill Cane called the meeting to order at 1:02pm.

1a. Territorial Land Acknowledgement

2. Approval of the Agenda

Recommended Motion:

"**That** the agenda for the June 22, 2021 Vegetation Management Advisory Committee be approved."

Moved by Chair Bill Cane

Seconded by Denise Marshall (County)

Carried

3. Disclosures of Interest

N/A

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4. Delegations

4a. (Pending) - Constitutional Right to a Healthy Environment – Blue Dot Movement

- No delegation was presented at this time.

5. Adoption of Minutes

Moved by Mark DeJong (OFA)

Seconded by Vice Chair Gigi Ludorf-Weaver (Sustainable Cobourg / Blue Dot Rep.)

"**That** the minutes for the April 20, 2021 Vegetation Management Advisory Committee be approved as distributed."

Carried

6. Business Arising from the Minutes

6a. County's Investigation of capital costs of various vegetation management methods as well as paving as a long-term plan

- **Cost Comparison Summary Table**

- There was a slight change to the Cost Comparison Summary Table that was circulated with the agenda. Bottom two costs were flipped. Revised copy is attached.
- Table provides a level of magnitude (plus / minus 25%) of eight management methods. Broken down into equipment, labour and material costs. Costs may vary depending on current inflation prices.
 - **Option 1: Do nothing**
 - Minimal management as required such as addressing complaints, visibility concerns and high priority areas.
 - Assumed to be less than current budget.
 - Increases County liability and does not meet Minimum Maintenance Standards (MMS)
 - Not a viable option.
 - **Option 2: Glyphosate**
 - Within current budget of \$20,000.
 - Single application.
 - **Option 3: Finalson**
 - Roughly \$45,000 per application.
 - Requires two applications per year.
 - Does not kill the root of the weed.

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- **Option 4a to 5b: Lease vs. Purchase (Mechanical Options)**
 - Mechanical options are the Herder or Raiber. Both are very similar in costs. Main difference is the initial investment (capital cost).
 - There is a minimum 3-month requirement on leasing.
 - Using the County's existing tractor (new tractor would cost an additional \$180k or additional rental cost of \$10k/month)
 - Purchase of equipment based on 15-year lifecycle (as discussed with supplier).
 - Mowing required twice per year, 2km/h
 - Fuel cost of \$1/L and mileage of 10l/hr for tractor.
 - Requires 240 hours of Operator time. Labour costs are estimated at 3 weeks per event. Labour costs are included as this will divert staff from regular maintenance activities.
 - Equipment maintenance costs are also included as part of equipment ownership. Do not know exact costs for blades, hydraulics, fittings etc.

- **Option 6a: Staff Weedeat**
 - Requires two operators. 5km/day.
 - Two cuts per year.
 - Includes cost of gas, labour (estimated at Operator 1 level – roughly 40,000/year) equipment and maintenance.

- **Option 6b: Contractor Weedeat**
 - Based on estimate of \$1/m.

- **Option 7: Granular Sealing**
 - \$10/m² – minimum 2m width along guiderail. Expensive option.
 - Sealing 20km/year.
 - 3-5-year lifecycle.
 - Annual maintenance for touch-ups / spot application.
 - Assumed some grading / prep work required prior to applying sealant.

- **Option 8: Paving**
 - \$300/tonne for hot mix. Minimum 2m width along guiderail. 50mm depth at handwork.
 - Paving 5km/year. 20-year lifecycle.
 - Includes cost for granular and base grading/prep.
 - Includes annual maintenance costs for crack sealing, guiderail repairs due to collisions (typically see 4-5 per year) etc.
 - Cost roughly \$360,000/year.

- Councillor Mandy Martin questioned if County staff have investigated vegetation control in European countries. Chair Bill Cane commented that in fairness, staff have not been instructed to look into this. Denise Marshall (County) responded that

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other methods may be investigated however we must consider that options available in Europe may not be available here and legislation may be different.

- Paul Burnham (Burnham Market) questioned if spraying is done by contractor or County staff and if contractor is limited to the use of glyphosate. He further questioned if County has considered other options for glyphosate resistant weeds. Depending on the number of weeds resistant to glyphosate in the County, it may be a waste of time spraying. Denise Marshall (County) responded that a contractor was obtained in previous years. Based on those contracts only glyphosate was used. If there is no vegetation at marked locations, the contractor does not spray. County also trialed Finalson two years ago. County investigates resistant weeds that are discovered.
- Denise Marshall (County) commented that County researched methods implemented by Eastern Ontario Municipalities. They have different noxious weeds than Northumberland County. Some products used include Arsenal Powerline, ClearView and Glyphosate. County is considering Finalson and open to the use of others. May require a combination of methods going forward because each location in the County is different.
- Denise Marshall (County) commented that County staff are working on an inventory of the guiderails and collecting information on their proximity to a water course or other environmental features, types of noxious weeds that are present, road base under the guiderail (to assess condition for paving/granular seal), etc. to determine which control methods are best suited. It will take some time to gather this information. County is required to follow the Weed Control Act and appointed Weed Inspector for all vegetation in County ROW.
- Vice Chair Gigi Ludorf-Weaver (Sustainable Cobourg / Blue Dot Rep.) commented that in the April 20th, 2021 meeting minutes Mark Dejong (OFA) stated that “the calculation of 49L of product sprayed over 49 km does not work out. According to his calculation, 3m width over 49km should be 36km of undiluted product.”. Vice Chair Ludorf-Weaver considers undiluted product a great concern. Removal of weeds should not compromise the health and safety of people. Mark DeJong (OFA) clarified that his comment made at the April 20th meeting was referring to the actual product that needs to be diluted.
- Vice Chair Gigi Ludorf-Weaver (Sustainable Cobourg / Blue Dot Rep.) requested explanation of the wording “Increases County Liability” used in Option 1 – Notes/Assumptions of the Cost Comparison Summary Table. Denise Marshall (County) responded that County must meet legislated Minimum Maintenance Standards (MMS) and roadside safety. Not meeting these standards puts County at risk. If vegetation is not removed and guiderails cannot be seen this increases the potential for collisions and will affect drainage, impacting the road. One claim could result in millions of dollars to the County. Vice Chair Ludorf-Weaver further

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commented that she would like to see data reflecting liability issues over the past five years. Chair Bill Cane responded that the County has maintained vegetation in past years therefore making this data unavailable. Mo Pannu (County) also explained that the County takes a proactive approach to manage risk and liability which includes meeting minimum maintenance standards and other provincial legislation to protect against claims. It is because of this proactive approach, that the County is in its current position with no large claims.

- Mark DeJong (OFA) commented that if equipment was purchased and amortized over a certain number of years, the cost may be reasonable and should be considered. We should be trying to decrease taxes and County budget.
- Chair Bill Cane questioned what the difference is between a Herder and Raiber. Denise Marshall (County) responded that both are similar and designed to mow between and around the guiderails. The difference is how they are attached to the tractor and that they come from two different manufacturers. Both designed to do the same thing but slightly different in how they are operated. The Herder is attached to the boom on the front of the tractor and the Raiber is a three-point hitch hookup that attaches to the back. County will be trialing the Raiber for this year's program using existing tractor to ensure it can handle the 96 km of County terrain. The Raiber attachment is currently delayed in delivery due to the ongoing pandemic and is expected to arrive by the end of June or beginning of July 2021. Results of the trial will be shared with this committee.
- Carmen Tinney (County) commented that the Herder and Raiber are new equipment to North America. They are European pieces that have been brought over in the past year. Grey Bruce County has been using this equipment and has been happy with its performance. They forwarded a video on how to operate.
- Denise Marshall (County) commented that County is gradually replacing all post and cable guiderail to steel beam. This is included in the budget as part of our capital program. Weed eating is still required at some locations where larger mechanical equipment cannot be used (i.e., around signs, structures, etc.)

6b. Review of Conservation (GRCA/LTC) response regarding their vegetation management methods

- County Staff reached out to various conservation authorities and was advised that they use a variety of pesticides dealing with a variety of species. Some continue to use glyphosate and several other chemicals depending on the type of species. Chemicals are used from a weed act perspective. Mike Muldoon (County) commented that Conservation Authorities use glyphosate as integrated pest management. None have banned glyphosate yet. It is commonly used for habitat restoration work. The Conservation Authority would not spray any land that is not their own. Based on the pesticide act, they have an exemption.

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6c. Review of responses from MECP regarding alternative products (vinegar), buffer zones etc.

- Denise Marshall (County) commented that County staff reached out to MECP with questions and have not received a reply. Will circulate response when received.

6d. Review of H&S incidents related to roadside vegetation management.

- Denise Marshall (County) commented that there are several concerns from a H&S perspective such as traffic on roads, noxious weeds, and ticks. A student in previous years was hospitalized after being exposed to poison ivy. A WSIB claim was filed. The student was wearing all required PPE and followed all necessary procedures. From a hazard assessment perspective, the first thing we do is eliminate. PPE is always the last resort when doing a hazard assessment. County has one documented incident related to noxious weeds. Staff have indicated in the past that poison ivy is an issue while weed eating. Other incidents may not have been reported depending on severity of infection. County would like to look at other viable options to eliminate the risk to students and operators. Staff also reached out to the member municipalities and four responded. Three continue to weedeat and one uses Finalson. They do not have documented incidents for students, but one staff member advised at their previous municipality they had incidents with poison ivy.

7. Communications

- Communications attached from Diane Hruska.

8. Staff Reports with Recommendations

N/A

9. Staff Reports for Information

N/A

10. Other Matters Considered by Committee

- Mark DeJong (OFA) questioned if there is any herbicide Blue Dot would approve other than glyphosate? Vice Chair Gigi Ludorf-Weaver (Sustainable Cobourg / Blue Dot Rep.) responded that according to the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment and their suggestion in a 2018 report is to use alternatives such as iron chelate, horticulture vinegar, acid, hot water, steam or soaps and sulfur. Blue Dot would support these alternatives.
- Vice Chair Gigi Ludorf-Weaver (Sustainable Cobourg / Blue Dot Rep.) further stated that as of 2009 the Ministry of Environment banned glyphosate province wide. It was banned for use near school yards, parks, and driveways. Vice Chair Ludorf-Weaver is concerned around spraying near schools and bus stops. Bernard Mayer (HKPRHU) responded that glyphosate has been banned for certain applications but not the application County has used it for. We need to be cautious not to imply that the County is spraying outside permitted areas. Chair Bill Cane commented that the

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County eliminated almost half of their spray locations in 2020 in response to resident concerns / requests.

11. Questions from the Public

11a. Statement from Diane Hruska.

“If this committee is looking to eliminate glyphosate and if Herder/Raiber trials work, this machinery could be the perfect solution.

I appreciate the plan to evaluate the guide rails individually and take a multi-faceted approach, if necessary, to look at other alternatives to glyphosate.

I would like to thank members of this committee for the work they have done so far. A special thank you to Denise Marshall and staff for their time and expertise, and to Bill and Gigi for their leadership and support in working toward the safest, cost-effective solution to this issue. I look forward to seeing the results of the trial and the inventory in the fall.” – Diane Hruska.

12. Motion to Move into Closed Session

N/A

13. Rise and Report from Closed Session

N/A

14. Next Meeting – Fall/Winter 2021

- Chair Bill Cane commented that a recommendation will need to be brought forth to Council at some point which is cost effective, covers liability, and is geared towards reducing the amount of glyphosate to a bare minimum. Denise Marshall (County) responded that County will be trialing the Raiber this summer. Would like to gather information over the next few months and look at developing recommendations. Staff are developing a survey in our GIS to complete an inventory of the guiderails. There are 96 km of guiderail within the County and this may take some time to gather information. Hoping to present recommendations for 2022 by late fall or early winter. Recommendation may be to trial the Herder in 2022. Ideally, County would like Operators to trial both. Chair Bill Cane suggested waiting for recommendations from staff before arranging another meeting. Before then, if there is a matter that needs to be brought to the Committee a meeting will be arranged.

15. Adjournment

Moved by Vice Chair Gigi Ludorf-Weaver (Sustainable Cobourg / Blue Dot Rep.)

Seconded by Mark DeJong (OFA)

Carried

Management Method	Annual Implementation				Initial Investment (One-Time costs)	Notes/Assumptions
	Equipment Cost (\$) (County or Rental)	Labour Cost (\$) (County)	Material Cost (\$) (Contracted or County)	Total Cost (Annual)		
Option 1 - Do Nothing	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$15,000.00	-	- Minimal Management/As required/Addressing Complaints - Assumed to be less than current budget - Increases County Liability - Does not meet Minimum Maintenance Standard (MMS) - Not a viable option
Option 2 - Glyphosate	-	-	\$20,000.00	\$20,000.00	-	- Current budget, single application
Option 3 - Finalson	-	-	\$90,000.00	\$90,000.00	-	- \$45K/application, likely two applications per year
Option 4A - Lease Herder	\$27,400.00	\$9,640.80	-	\$37,040.80	-	- Using the County's existing tractor (a new tractor would cost an additional \$180k or additional rental cost of \$10k/month) - Purchase of equipment based on 15-year lifecycle - Mowing twice/year, 2km/hr - Fuel cost of \$1/L and Mileage of 10L/hr for tractor - 240 hours of Operator time
Option 4B - Purchase Herder	\$9,733.33	\$10,640.80	-	\$20,374.13	\$65,000.00	
Option 5A - Lease Raiber	\$27,400.00	\$9,640.80	-	\$37,040.80	-	
Option 5B - Purchase Raiber	\$10,066.67	\$10,640.80	-	\$20,707.47	\$70,000.00	
Option 6A - Staff Weedeat	\$3,040.00	\$36,259.20	-	\$39,299.20	-	
Option 6B - Contractor Weedeat	-	-	\$100,000.00	\$100,000.00	-	
Option 7 - Granular Sealing	-	-	\$505,000.00	\$505,000.00	-	
Option 8 - Paving	-	-	\$370,000.00	\$370,000.00	-	

From: Diane Hruska <hruska.diane@gmail.com>

Date: Mon, May 31, 2021, 11:19 AM

Subject: Questions re Vegetation Management Committee

To: Bill Cane <wcane@hamiltontownship.ca>, Gigi Ludorf-Weaver <gludorfweaver@sustainablecobourg.ca>

Hello Bill and Gigi,

After observing the last meeting and reading the minutes sent out, I have a couple of questions.

In item 6a it states that Denise Marshall was asked to bring forward statistics on the number of incidents showing staff injuries to noxious weeds, ticks, etc., which lead to the County switching from mechanical means to glyphosate. As the public works managers in our rural municipalities have continued using mechanical means instead of spraying, is anyone contacting them out to see if they have had any safety issues with weedeaters and if so, how they have resolved them?

Also it appears that the next committee meeting has been pushed back to June 22 to allow time to gather information. Will staff be postponing the application of Roundup, typically scheduled to take place in July, until a decision regarding vegetation management for the guide rails has been made by Council?

Thank you,
Diane Hruska