

MINUTES
City of Welland Heritage Advisory Committee
Thursday May 1, 2025
6 p.m. Room 108, Welland Civic Square

Present: Mary Adelle Patterson, Chair; Connie McCutcheon, Vice Chair, Tom Higginbotham, Tia DeAgazio, Rose Dzugan, Nora Reid, Secretary/Treasurer, Researcher; Greg Lipinski, Staff Liaison
Guests: Jessica Ruddell, Director of Community Services, City of Welland; Grant Munday, Director of Planning and Development Services, City of Welland

1. Call to Order:

Chair Mary Adelle Patterson called the meeting to order at 6:06 p.m.

2. Presentation by Jessica Ruddell, Director of Community Services re: Welland Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan

Ms. Ruddell noted that the initial plan was completed in 2019 and that the city is currently doing a mid-term update. Feedback is being sought from various City Committees and the public. Members of this Committee will receive an “interest holder” survey, completion of which is requested within the next two weeks. Consultants are Lees and Associates. Need is to identify what is still valuable and what change is needed. Aim is to complete consultations within the month of May and update the plan in June.

City has identified a gap within the current Plan as it contains very little about heritage. Ms. Ruddell detailed the progress that has been made over the last five years including new and upgraded parks, cultural events on city property, etc. Covid interrupted completing many of the recommendations.

She noted that one item referred to heritage - Recommendation 38: promoting arts, culture and heritage within public spaces by employing a comprehensive strategy.

Welland’s community profile has changed since 2016 with immigrants from different countries, an overall older demographic with middle aged residents dropping and youth and older aged residents growing and an expected population over 100,000 by 2041. Many Parks and Recreation assets are in poor condition.

The Community Engagement online public survey closes May 2nd.

Feedback from Committee members included the need for an art gallery, importance of showcasing heritage designated places like the Welland Museum (Carnegie Building) as well as the revitalized Central Fire Station as a tourist destination, working to move the latter forward with city support to achieve a potentially similar benefit to Welland as that of the Distillery District to Toronto. Also mentioned was the need to protect downtown historic buildings and attract people with a “Downtown Heritage District” label.

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Members noted the importance of City support for grants to restore heritage buildings and the potential to use our downtown heritage buildings like the Courthouse and Central Fire Hall for movie/TV locations.

The Committee Chair noted that the Committee's Historic Welland booklet could be used as the basis for more self guided walking tours with QR codes linking to online history of the individual buildings similar to the new Cook's Mills War of 1812 Trail created by the Committee in conjunction with the Welland Parks Dept. Welland has at least six well defined and distinct historic areas including Plymouth Cordage, French Town, Wartime Housing which also could be walking tours. Recognition and establishment of heritage districts is important. Also noted was the potential to link a Welland Canal Walking Trail and other trails to Niagara's UNESCO GeoPark, as the 100th anniversary of Welland Canal will be in 2028.

Ms. Ruddell responded that the City is meeting with a community member who has experience with these types of trails in New York State. Another opportunity is enhancing walkability of cemeteries especially in rural areas such as Cook's Mills. It was noted that new demographics provide new opportunities for activities for adults including heritage.

Committee members expressed regret that the City's new logo no longer includes the East Main Street bridge and suggested history and promotions should be tied to the Welland Canal as that is recognized across North America.

Ms. Ruddell noted that parks and facilities should serve all ages, not just young people, that the arts and culture sector should expand and that the tree canopy should be protected for climate resilience.

Chair M. Patterson suggested that the city should capitalize on existing heritage assets and existing key stakeholders, especially in the downtown core, such as Courthouse, Central Fire Hall, Carnegie Building (Welland Museum) and old Park Theatre, etc. Vice Chair C. McCutcheon noted the importance of WIFI, smart street furniture and change management. Balance is needed to protect historic areas and direct development to more appropriate areas. Director of Planning G. Munday suggested that the Master Plan should contain more opportunities to enjoy heritage i.e. possibly tours of Court House, trail along Feeder Canal.

3. Recognition of Traditional Territories

Chair Mary Adelle Patterson read the Land Acknowledgement recognizing that we meet on the traditional territories of Indigenous peoples.

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3. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest

None.

4. Approval of Minutes of April 2, 2025

Moved by Rose Dzugan, seconded by Tia DeAgazio, that the Minutes of the meeting held April 2, 2025 be approved. Carried.

5. Business Arising from the Minutes

Cook's Mills War of 1812 Heritage Trail

N. Reid reported that the text for the website to accompany the Cook's Mills War of 1812 Trail was reviewed by herself, C. McCutcheon and T. DeAgazio and some corrections were made. This was re-submitted to Dave Steven, Manager of Parks, Forests and Cemeteries and Terri Sheppard, City Webmaster. Once this is approved and posted on the website for the Trail the QR codes on the Trail signs will be live.

She noted that Mr. Steven is still discussing with the City of Niagara Falls installation of the final three proposed signs for the Trail marking the 200+ year old "Living Witness" trees as those are located within the area of Cook's Mills that is part of the City of Niagara Falls.

Battle of Cook's Mills National Historic Site cairn – responsibility for care

Dave Steven, Manager of Parks, Forests and Cemeteries, is discussing this with Parks Canada who owns the site. No response yet.

Feeder Canal Junction Lock Road signs.

Staff Liaison Greg Lipinski is waiting for Niagara Region to prepare an agreement. He expects to hear back within the next week and a half.

Osage Orange Trees Plaque, Riverside Drive

Waiting for delivery of this Plaque.

St. Michael the Archangel Ukrainian Catholic Church Recognition Plaque

Plaque has been approved by the church and ordered.

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New Operating Bylaw

Greg Lipinski reported that once the Clerk's Department has reviewed this he will be doing a report for City Council.

Outreach and Incentives for Heritage Property Owners

Greg Lipinski reported that following the public Open House for the Community Improvement Plan, Downtown and Health Corridor, there has been no update. Grant Munday reported that CIP consultants will recommend expanding the Community Improvement Area along West Main Street to Hooker Street and that any heritage properties in the City be eligible for financial incentives. Recommendation will be for more money in the CIP programme and an increase in grant money available to heritage property owners under the CIP.

Central Fire Hall Update

Nora Reid and Tia DeAgazio reported that there will be a Grand Opening for the main floor Firefighting Heritage Exhibit on June 7th from 12-4 p.m., with speeches at 1 p.m. Everyone is invited to attend. There will be regular open days during the summer following the opening day. Educational programming and interpretive signage will be in both English and French and for open days and tours docents will be knowledgeable and able to deliver details of the firefighting history and use of the building and artefacts. Organization is continuing to do fundraising and applying for grants. Trivia Night in April was very successful.

Digitization Project

Secretary continues to sort and box old files for storage and work on scanning original research reports to submit digital copies to Terri Shepard, City webmaster, to add to the Committee website.

Heritage Planners Meeting

Researcher/Consultant N. Reid has attended two monthly meetings of Heritage Planners from the Region and reported that both Grimsby and St. Catharines Heritage Advisory Committees are in the process of establishing Heritage Conservation Districts under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act. They are in discussions with property owners in those areas.

St. Catharines and Grimsby Planning Departments keep lists of

- a) skilled tradespeople and companies knowledgeable about proper approaches to restoration and maintenance of heritage buildings and
- b) insurance companies knowledgeable about actual requirements for insuring

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designated heritage properties as opposed to misinformation. These municipalities will share their lists with this Committee.

6. Other Business/New Business

Plymouth Cordage Historic District

N. Reid reported that one resident of this area has requested the Committee to look at a possible Heritage Conservation District designation under Part. V of the Ontario Heritage Act for the Plymouth Cordage Historic District.

The following information was obtained from municipal Heritage Planners from the Niagara Region. A District Designation is generally done in two parts - Part 1 is the detailed architectural and cultural heritage assessment and Part 2 is development of the actual Heritage District Plan. Both parts are generally outsourced to a consultant which could cost up to \$100,000.00, however, as most of Part 1 pertaining to Plymouth Cordage was already completed in 2001 before installation of the Historic District street signs this could be completed in house to save money.

A second possibility is designating remaining original Plymouth Cordage properties individually under Part IV of the Act which would provide individual protection. This could be accomplished by the Committee's researcher in house with the possible assistance of heritage restoration student volunteers and hiring of a title searcher.

Chair M.A. Patterson reported that a group of neighbours from this area met with Mayor Champion to discuss the unsuitability of a 10-storey apartment building in this area and felt they had a good reception. They would like to be sure that their concerns are heard by City Council.

Action: Chair will suggest to Plymouth Cordage neighbourhood group that they find out which individual owners of original Plymouth Cordage properties would be interested in having their properties designated under Part IV of the Heritage Act to provide the protections available under a Part IV designation.

Mapping of Historic Areas in Welland

Rose Dzugan is working on mapping the distinct historic areas that exist within the city. These include:

Plymouth Cordage Historic Area – (core establishment of Italian community)

Frenchtown – associated with Cotton Mill (core establishment of French-Canadian community)

War time houses – Lincoln and Southworth area

Parkway Drive - elite subdivision early 20th century

Welland Downtown core –“Downtown Heritage District”

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Cook's Mills central core
Veterans' neighbourhood – Montgomery Road (poppy street signs)

C. McCutcheon suggested historic areas could be a topic for another booklet.

Possible Interpretive signage for 2nd Aqueduct with website (T. Hughes history)

Deferred to June meeting.

Visit to Sts. Cyril and Methodius Ukrainian Catholic Church St. Catharines

Deferred to June meeting.

Outlook and photo problems new Committee laptop.

Deferred to June meeting.

Treasurer's Report

Only pre-approved expenses this month, no new invoices.

Correspondence

Secretary circulated a list of correspondence received and sent between April 2nd and April 29th in advance of the meeting.

10. Adjournment

Motion to Adjourn by Tia De Agazio, seconded by C. McCutcheon at 7:57 p.m.