

Camp Denison Committee

October 19, 2016

Meeting Minutes

Smokey's Den, Camp Denison

Meeting Opened: 7:03 pm

Committee Member Attendance: (x indicates attendance)

x	Jim Lacey, Chair	x	Bob Gorton, Member		Jack LoCicero, Member
x	Chris Roop, Clerk		George Langlais, Member		Ella Richardson, Member
x	Bob Apprich, Consultant		Kim Dowling, Consultant	x	Don Anderson, Camp Manager
x	Kim Therrien, Member				

Guests: Jim Boynton; Laura Repplier, ConCom Member

Workshop in the Woods

- The meeting was dedicated to a discussion of the concerns and issues that have arisen related to Workshop in the Woods (WIW) and changes to the terms of their contract, or whether their contract for 2017 should be renewed.
- Laura Repplier, a member of the Georgetown Conservation Commission, was asked to attend to relay information she uncovered about the operation of WIW and as a knowledgeable resource related to the conduct of operations involving children, such as staff training, camper / staff ratios, etc.
- The following are the key provisions that should be included as changes to the contract.
 - The maximum term be returned to four weeks.
 - WIW has already agreed to this condition.
 - An independent cleaner be hired by the Camp to clean the bathrooms, kitchen and lodge during WIW and be billed to WIW.
 - WIW has asked a number of specific questions regarding the cleaning. These questions will be able to be answered based on the arrangement with the cleaning company.
 - The question arose whether the cleaners would be required to have background checks under the Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) law.
 - As long as no children were present when they cleaned, they would not need to meet that requirement.
 - We need to confirm when the last campers would be gone and schedule cleaning ½ an hour later.
 - The daily rate be increased to \$300 per day.
 - It appears that the current rate, which is very low compared to the market, was established long ago when WIW represented an extremely significant part of Camp Denison's annual budget. That is no longer the case.
 - Laura noted that the ConCom has questioned why the rate is so low.
 - In addition to the low rate, WIW is provided with free storage both in the lodge and in a shed on the grounds through-out the year.

- Protection of the facilities during activities be required e.g. plastic tablecloths and drop cloths under the tables during painting sessions.
 - WIW started out this year with no protection of the facilities. When asked to provide, they complied, but the quality of the materials used didn't stand up to the task.
 - We will need to specify the level of protection and have inspections to verify that they are in compliance.
- Counselor age, experience and staffing levels per camper need to be in compliance with state law and verified.
 - It was noted that we have never received documentation listing the staff, their ages, training and whether they have CORI background checks.
 - The number of campers seemed to be excessive for the number of staff, exceeding 100 campers during the July sessions.
 - The group was generally unaware that it is the job of the Board of Health to confirm that WIW is in compliance with the appropriate laws related to the operation of a camp for children. Deb Rogers interviewed the directors of WIW and went through the checklist in June prior to issuing an occupancy permit to WIW.
 - Jim and Laura will speak with Deb Rogers to ascertain what information was provided by WIW.
- A number of those present commented on how WIW, when run by Stacy Fix, was a well-run camp. The following were used to describe how the camp operated:
 - Very professional, a pain to deal with, but very organized.
 - There was a full time guard at the entrance when kids were present.
 - Sessions were two weeks long and had a theme through-out the session.
 - Camp was very creative, campers put on a show at the end of the two weeks and parents attended. Campers left with art and crafts they had created while attending.
 - WIW always left some sort of improvement to Camp Denison at the end of camp e.g. the totem pole.
- Many of these aspects have been lost under the new management of WIW. While some of the same aspects of the camp experience are still present, the feeling was that they were a shadow of what had gone before and the overall quality of the camp has decreased. The focus seems to have changed from a creative learning environment to one of keeping campers busy.
- The issue of not being able to use the lodge and Nature Center on weekends while WIW is in session was discussed. While WIW is paying a daily rate, including weekends, to be able to keep their materials and activity areas set-up, it means that the camp cannot accommodate any requests from other users during the prime summer season. This is another item that should be negotiated with WIW to enable others to make use of the camp during the summer.
- As the discussion proceeded, it became apparent that there were a considerable number of negative aspects related to the continued relationship with WIW. Looking at the alternatives, we see the following:
 - North Shore Nature Programs (NSNP) is looking to expand its association with Camp Denison.

- NSNP would have programs that are more oriented toward nature and educational content with only 30 to 40 participants in weekly sessions. This is more in keeping with the camp's mission and would represent less wear and tear on the facilities.
- Weekends would be open meaning more families and groups would be able to utilize the facility during the summer.
- The revenue for the summer would be equal, based on the increased rate for WIW.
- We would not have to deal with outside cleaners.
- NSNP has a solid track record of providing programs, and while there is always a level of risk with children's programs, there is significantly less concern that children would be put at risk compared to the performance exhibited by WIW.
- Laura and Jim will talk with Deb Rogers at the Board of Health to see what documentation was provided by WIW to see what the occupancy permit was based on.
- Laura will report to the ConCom on what she finds at the Board of Health and that the committee is leaning toward not renewing the contract with WIW.

Meeting adjourned: 8:00 pm

Scheduled Committee Meetings: 2016 – 11/8, 12/13