

Waskesiu Cabin Owners' Association Submission
Re: Future of washroom lots in cabin area
Waskesiu Community Plan Review
August 2007

Submitted on behalf of the WCOA by
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Background Information

At the Annual General Meeting of the Waskesiu Cabin Owners' Association (WCOA) held on July 2, 2007, cabin owners strongly stated that they wanted input into the future of the washroom lots in our area once the washrooms are decommissioned in October, 2008. Since these lots are in our neighbourhood, cabin owners felt we should have the most say into what becomes of them and a submission by the WCOA should be strongly weighted in the decision making process. The cabin owners requested a second meeting specifically to discuss the options for these lots. This submission is the feedback resulting from the meeting held on August 5, 2007 in the Waskesiu Community Hall as well as input received by WCOA directors in person, by email, and by phone.

Cabin owners paid for the construction and continue to pay for the cleaning and upkeep of the washroom and shower facilities in our area, although these buildings are a Parks Canada asset. Further, cabin owners paid for the installation of sewer and water services in this area so each cabin owner could hook up to these services in their individual cabins. At the time of water and sewer installation, a Memorandum of Understanding between cabin owners and Parks Canada provided that the washrooms be maintained for a period of time until cabin owners could construct washrooms and hook up to the service. That period ends in October 2008. Although there is some support amongst cabin owners to maintain a couple of washroom/shower buildings for continued use and there is a serious shortage of public washrooms in Waskesiu, Parks Canada officials have indicated that they will no longer assist our volunteer organization to do this even at our expense. The directors, realizing that they are not in a position to administer licences of occupation, cleaning staff and liability insurance without Parks Canada assistance, have recommended to the membership that maintaining these services (or using the buildings/lots for another purpose by our organization) is not an option.

This report includes the options suggested for the use of these lots, excluding continuing to provide washroom services, and the positive and negative implications of each idea. The 451 cabin owners represented by our association request that Parks Canada consider primarily the suggestions in this brief when planning the future of the washroom lots in our area.

Information about lots:

This report is based on the following information supplied to the association by Terry Schneider, Town site manager.

- There are washrooms located on Chickadee, Eagle, and Grebe Streets, each on two – 30 foot lots, in total therefore six 30 foot lots. The Chickadee facility also has showers.
- There are washrooms located on Jay, Loon, Nighthawk, and Pelican Streets on 40 foot lots therefore in total four 40 foot lots. Jay and Nighthawk also have showers.
- In addition, there is one undeveloped 30 foot lot on Grebe Street
- Some of the washrooms encroach on neighbouring cabin lots.

Washroom Removal

1. Once the washrooms are decommissioned in October 2008, they should be **promptly** removed. Cabin owners do not want them left to deteriorate.
2. The buildings are well constructed and still have many years of serviceable use left in them. Cabin owners do not want to see this resource which they paid for wasted. The

- original builder should be consulted about the possibility of removing these facilities successfully from their pads.
3. The washrooms could be moved within Waskesiu town site to provide needed washroom facilities to the general public. There already is use of these facilities by non-cabin owner visitors to PANP.
 4. The facilities could be sold for removal. Cabin owners strongly feel that, since we paid for these facilities, any net proceeds after costs must be reinvested in the cabin area.
 5. If the proceeds cannot be allocated directly, an equivalent grant should be made. Cabin owners would like this money to be spent on road resurfacing, enhancing garbage facilities, naturalizing green spaces, and community message boards.
 6. Please note that asbestos board used on the interior of these facilities would increase the cost of demolition.

Release of washroom lots for cabin development

The existing Waskesiu Community Plan specifically states no further release of lots is allowed. Therefore, as part of this review process, the Community Plan would have to be **amended to state that lots could be released** for cabin development.

Cabin owners are concerned about what process Parks Canada will use to release these lots to individuals for cabin leases.

1. Auctioning the lots was suggested and this method would raise the most amount of money. However, cabin owners would want assurances that these funds will be used in our area. Unfortunately, this method would mean that the lots would not be affordable to most people. This area has traditionally provided an affordable option for families to vacation and there is concern that this will change the area and make Waskesiu accessible only to the wealthy.
2. Support was also expressed for releasing the lots at fair market value to allow access to the cabin area for families desiring a cabin.
3. Lots could be released at fair market value by lottery. The concern expressed with this method was that the people may intend to flip the lease for profit rather than using the lease themselves. To avoid this, the successful lottery applicant could be expected to retain personally the lease and build a cabin within two years for example.
4. The option also exists to release only one of the two 30 foot lots on Chickadee, Eagle and Grebe Streets, leaving the other as the location for garbage bins and passive, naturalized, low maintenance green space. Selected lots could be released and others could be retained by the Park either for current needs or future release.

Development of the vacant lots for alternate use

If development was undertaken by the WCOA, a licence of occupation or lease, land rent, and liability insurance would be required. Therefore, these options, suggested by only a few cabin owners, are not being pursued by the WCOA executive. Very limited interest was expressed by cabin owners for the following options and they received little or no support at the August 5th meeting. To be feasible, these options would require start up and maintenance costs by PANP.

1. Camp kitchens or fire pits - In the era of the canvas roofed shack tents, PANP provided camp kitchens for the use of residents. Although there is a desire for a return to this wonderful community building scenario, concern was also expressed about noise and vandalism.

2. Children's playground – Some residents would like to see a safe children's play area provided as our area is so crowded.
3. Parking – Due to the crowding in our area, parking for residents and visitors is always a problem. These lots could become open or assigned parking that could be paid for on a seasonal basis. This would help to alleviate the parking problems but would be difficult to administer and enforce.
4. Remodelling of the washrooms for use as storage facility, workshops, day care, or facilities for community groups
5. Overflow camping for guests of cabin owners – Sewer, water and power hook ups could be provided and rented like trailer court lots.

Accommodating Garbage Bins

Currently washroom lots also house the garbage bins and WADRA beverage recycling containers. As well, there is a well used community message board, grey water disposal and water taps on the washroom buildings.

The following options were discussed for the garbage services:

1. No change to the location of the garbage bins. They would remain on the washroom lots after the removal of the washrooms but could be repainted, decorated with murals, screened with vegetation or screened with a fence. The rest of the lot would become a naturalized, passive space blocked with large rocks to prohibit parking.
2. The garbage bins could be relocated to Tamarack Street. Pullouts for garbage trucks to stop could be constructed on the east side. To obscure these areas from the cabin lots, vegetation screening could be left or added. This option would require additional smaller bins on Waskesiu Drive as many walking cabin owners would take their garbage with them that direction.
3. Garbage bins could be moved to Waskesiu Drive. Having large garbage bins on our main street would not present our community in a favourable way.
4. A combination of the above options could be worked out. For example, the Pelican Street bin could be relocated beside the trailer court in the green space. The Chickadee Street bin could be located on Lakeview Drive off the end of the short Bluebird Street. Some bins could remain on the streets with 30 foot lots as there are double lots there for washrooms and an undeveloped lot on Grebe Street. Because of the higher population density on the 30 foot lot streets more garbage capacity is needed there.

Retention of the vacant lots in as passive green space

Cabin owners had differing ideas of what a green space is. Some felt that a grassed area would require maintenance at a level that Parks Canada could not provide. Others advocated a naturalized, low maintenance, passive space with trees and natural vegetation. The suggestion was also made to include benches, although concerns of noise and vandalism were also expressed.

Advantages of this option include providing green space in a congested area, safe areas for children playing, the possibility to leave garbage bins there, the room to accommodate community message boards, and no licence of occupation requirement.

This option does not raise any revenue for Parks Canada or for a possible future municipality. However, naturalizing the lots as green space leaves the option for releasing the lots or other options open for the future as long as the Community Plan is altered to allow this possibility.

Other Suggestions and Considerations

Loss of the washrooms means loss of the community message boards on the side of the buildings. Cabin owners would like to see an attractive replacement to these bulletin boards placed in a convenient location like near the garbage bins or in the green spaces. Another possible location would be at the Waskesiu Drive end of selected cabin streets.

With no washroom facilities for cabin owners when their own service is not working due to weather or breakdown, the grey water disposals become very important. Proper disposals and water taps need to be maintained in this area so as not to jeopardize environmental integrity.

Summary

Cabin owners request that, since they paid for the washrooms and are residents in the area of their location, our wishes be given priority over other stakeholders in the decisions concerning the future of the washrooms and lots. The major components to consider are the location of the garbage bins and the use of the space the washrooms now occupy either as passive green space or release for cabin development. **Cabin owners feel strongly that all revenue realized from the release of these lots should be reinvested in our area** for infrastructure such as garbage relocation and road resurfacing. Before any binding decisions affecting our area are written into the Waskesiu Community Plan, we expect Parks Canada to consult directly with the WCOA executive.

Recommendations from the WCOA Board of Directors to Parks Canada Agency

1. Amend the Waskesiu Community Plan to allow flexible timing for release of some or all of the washroom lots and undeveloped lot on Grebe Street for cabin development over the time frame that the Community Plan is in force.
2. Establish a mechanism to fairly release the lots at fair market value to people interested in developing a cabin.
3. **An amount equal to the revenue realized from the release of these lots should be reinvested in the cabin area.** The roads need resurfacing and the options in #4 and #5 will require funds to establish. The Waskesiu Community Plan, circa 1999, and currently in effect, states in two separate places that the roads in the cabin area need upgrading in the near future.¹ The roads have further deteriorated in the intervening years. Priority needs to be given to repairing these roads; it is overdue. If an amount equal to release fees from washroom lots cannot fund repaving, then the lots should be reserved until such a time that it can.
4. **In the area with 30 foot lots:**
 - a. Release the undeveloped lot on Grebe Street and **one of each of the two** washrooms lots on Chickadee, Eagle and Grebe Streets for cabin leases.

¹ In the section "Streetscapes" under **Heritage Character**, "The cabin area has a quaint atmosphere despite the tightly packed housing which dominates the streetscape. The streets in this area need to be upgraded." In the "Streets" section under **Utilities and Infrastructure**, "The following streets were not upgraded with the recent major recapitalization and require attention in the near future:...a network of streets in the Cabin area."

- b. Leave the garbage bin, WADRA beverage recycling containers, grey water disposal and water taps on the second, unreleased lot.
- c. On the retained lots, replant trees and vegetation to return the lots to naturalized, low-maintenance, passive green spaces surrounded by large rocks to prevent vehicle parking.
- d. Design an attractive, covered, free standing community message board and place it on this lot also.

5. In the area with 40 foot lots:

- a. Create passive green spaces, garbage and message boards as explained in #4 b., c., and d. above on the washroom lots on Jay, Loon, Nighthawk and Pelican Streets.
- b. Relocate at least one of the garbage bins from the streets with the 40 foot lots to the east side of Tamarack Street as a trial. Construct a pull off on the east side of Tamarack and screen the bins with vegetation.
- c. Since the location of loops G and H in the trailer court may not allow enough room for a garbage bin, relocate the garbage bin on Pelican to the other side of the street or the other side of the adjoining green space.
- d. The option to release these four more lots could be exercised at any time, for example, once the release of the other lots has been tested, once the trial relocation of garbage bins has been evaluated, or once more funds need to be generated for a capital expenditure in our area.