

GRAND PRE AND AREA FACILITATION SESSION

Horton Community Centre

**May 5, 2009
7:00 PM**

Attendance:

David Mangle, Facilitator

Charles Curry, Grand Pre and Area Community Association

Erin Beaudin, Kings CED Agency

Chrystal Fuller, Municipality of Kings County

Seamus McGreal, Municipality of Kings County

App. 50 members of the public

Introduction

Charles Curry introduced the session with the hope that community members will have an opportunity to air their ideas and have some of their questions answered. He introduced David Mangle, the facilitator.

David explained that he wanted people to feel safe and respected during the facilitation session. For this purpose, he set out a series of norms of behaviour and. The participants agreed to the terms identified.

David asked participants to share their hopes, fears, and expectations for the evening's session: For hopes, the participants asked for an understanding of issues, concerns, and positions. They wanted truthful answers to their questions. For fears, the participants maintained that the session may divide the community and that there may be no room for opinions. For expectations, the participants asked for an agreement on important issues and concerns, common ground, and answers to all of their questions, at a later date, if none were immediately available. David then asked Erin Beaudin and Chrystal Fuller to provide context for the participants.

Context

Erin explained that the evening session is, first and foremost, about listening to the community. The community has recently expressed concerns over UNESCO and that is what initiated the evening session. She said that UNESCO is a great opportunity for the area and it is a benefit to be recognized. There will help the local economy and reinvigorate tourism that has experienced a decline in recent years. Chrystal welcomed brutal and honest feedback from participants. She admitted that the process is not perfect and asked the community to provide their opinions on how to better communicate with the four distinct communities.

David welcomed questions from the participants which he noted on flip charts. A dozen questions were recorded. Subsequently, Erin and Chrystal provided answers to the questions in the order in which they were asked.

Questions and Answers

Question 1:

There is a buffer zone associated with the proposed UNESCO boundary. Who determines this boundary? What size will it be? What impact will it have on the people living inside it?

Chrystal F.: The Management Plan Working Group will determine where the buffer zone will be and whether we actually need one in the first place. The intent of the buffer is to protect the UNESCO boundary, much like bubble wrap protects a vase.

Participant 1: The buffer may protect the heritage that is commemorated with the UNESCO designation but it may have an adverse effect on the heritage areas that are not commemorated under UNESCO. Some significant areas in the community may be lost. We need to make sure the right representatives are on the Working Group.

Participant 2: The community planning is the most important part of the entire process. We can have development without growth. That needs to be clear. The community needs to express what it means by development. The Outstanding Universal Value may yet change.

Comment: All recommendations for change should come before the community first.

CF: The Working Group is intent on bringing all ideas before the community

Other comments related to the fact that the Marsh Body governs the dykeland, not the Municipality. Marshland Act is the law. Farmers have maintained and expanded the dykes long after the Acadians. There are many social scientists living within the community that should be on the Working Group.

It was noted that the UNESCO board will provide an appropriate response to this concern.

Question 2:

What is the advantage of becoming a UNESCO site?

Erin B.: There are a number of reasons for UNESCO designation. First, it will help to preserve agricultural land. It will develop pride in community and heritage.

Charlie C.: It will highlight the important features of the community. It will provide more value in the community.

Some comments related to the fact that the process has not brought the community together, Lunenburg has changed as a result of designation, and Covenanter Church does not receive funding from this designation but it should.

Question 3:

Tax assessments here are similar to Wolfville and Lunenburg; however, concentration is different here because we are not a town. Will there be any impact on taxes?

CF: We are conducting a study on tax assessments in the area.

Participant: I believe property assessment in this area has a capped value and it is below the provincial average. We need to find a comparable situation. The community plan is the key to retaining our community the way it is now. We don't want urban development.

Other comments from participants related to changes to existing land restrictions, and how to accommodate changes in traffic patterns. One participant suggested that a socio-economic impact assessment is required.

Question 4:

Will there be an impact on secondary taxes due to infrastructure that may accommodate growth?

CF: There is no additional servicing on the agenda for the area

Question 5:

What other UNESCO sites, that are also communities, have experienced a change in demographics?

CF: We have not conducted a demographic impact study or a comparative analysis. We will follow up on this.

Question 6:

How is the UNESCO process paid for? Who carries the cost later, after designation?

EB: The budget is in the package presented to participants. The total budget amount is \$1.2 million. \$500,000 of this budget is for the proposal and the rest is in kind contributions. Several organizations have contributed funds and in kind services, including the Federal and Provincial governments, and the County of Kings.

CF: As for funding after designation, there is not much expected. There will likely be a monument to the UNESCO designation but that is about it. The dykes need maintenance but the Province is responsible for that.

A few of the participants had comments about the condition of roads in the area. Grand Pre Road along the dyke to North Grand Pre is "horrible" and Long Island Road is "a disaster". Traffic enforcement is required along Highway 1.

Question 7:

Will there be an increase in infrastructure if the community does not want it?

CF: There is no servicing on the agenda for the area. If the community does not want new infrastructure, it will not receive any without some kind of public process.

Question 8:

The Nomination website, accessed through the Municipal website, is not up to date. Could it be updated to include new information, beyond 2008?

EB: We will ensure that the link to the Nomination Grand Pre website from the Municipal website is functional and we will include these questions as a Q&A on the Nomination website.

It was noted that the UNESCO Board will include these questions as a Q&A on the Nomination website.

Question 9:

How was this project presented to the County? What is the whole story?

EB: We used an economic impact approach with the County. It was the same approach we used with the community. There was no “magic presentation”. Christophe Rivet from Parks Canada was the first person to gather stakeholders together for the purpose of discussing the potential for a UNESCO nomination based on Grand Pre’s listing on UNESCO’s tentative list. This was back in March 2007.

Question 10:

How does the economic development agency’s role impact the process?

EB: Kings CED is a player in this process, not a leader. We have always understood that this process has to change with the circumstances. The UNESCO Board understands that we need a community chair. This community chair will take my place as co-chair on the Board.

Question 11:

The Graham Report was produced for Lunenburg to achieve and manage a UNESCO designation. It set a precedent for existing policy. Will this process use the GR as a model? How many places have followed the GR? What was the result?

CF: The Graham Report was not used as a model. We are not aware of it being used as a model elsewhere. We understand that this report is available online and we will examine it.

Question 12:

Who governs or controls the UNESCO site when it is in place?

CF: The Heritage Advisory Committee and the Town of Lunenburg manage the UNESCO site there. The Management Plan Working Group will create a management structure for the proposed UNESCO site here. It will likely be managed through a partnership: Parks Canada will control their piece; the Marsh Body will control the dykeland, etc. We will come back and discuss this structure with you when it is established.

It was noted that the UNESCO Board will return to the community and discuss the management structure of the UNESCO site, before it is established.

Question 13:

Can we get out of UNESCO once we're in it?

EB: The Government of Canada submits the proposal, UNESCO inscribes the site. It is vital to UNESCO that the community shows that it is on side the nomination.

Some participants commented that an out clause is vital. A socio-economic assessment can provide transparency. A private vote should decide whether to proceed with the nomination but there were questions over who would be eligible to vote.

It was noted that the UNESCO Board will provide information to the community on opting out of UNESCO, once the site is designated.

It was noted that the UNESCO Board will discuss holding a vote.