

Open House Summary

RM East St Paul Ponds (Eagle Creek, Southlands, Countryside and By-the-Park)
August 15, 2019

Overview

The purpose of the Open House was to provide information and update the public on the current state of the ponds in Eagle Creek, Southlands, Countryside and By-the-Park, as well as answer questions, gather feedback, and discuss possible options and solutions with residents.

The Open House was hosted by the RM of East St. Paul on Thursday August 15th, 2019. The event ran from 6-8pm in the RM's Council Chambers. To provide the greatest flexibility for attendees, the event was held as a come-and-go. Poster boards, a pre-recorded power point presentation (*Managing the Ponds*) and other displays (samples of algae and duckweed) provided information to attendees (Appendix A). Representatives from the RM Administration and Council were on hand to answer questions and obtain feedback. A representative from North South Consultants, an aquatic consulting firm providing advice to the RM, was on hand to answer questions on water chemistry and pond health.

The event was advertised on the RM of East St. Paul's website, Facebook page, as well as sent by email to residents. Posters advertising the event were also placed throughout the municipality at the community mailboxes. A copy of the *Protect Our Ponds* brochure was available and attendees were invited to fill out the Open House Participant Survey.

Information Presented

The presentation boards and in the looping power point provided background on the function of the ponds including regulating storm water and nutrient impacts on the Red River, creating habitat for wildlife, fish and other aquatic species, and providing aesthetic benefits for residents. Background information on water quality indicators, as well as an overview of information collected through water quality investigations over the spring and summer of 2019 was presented. The relationship between nutrients entering the ponds and aquatic vegetation growth was outlined. The implications of a changing climate on the ponds was also presented. An overview of RM actions to date, what has been learned, and potential next steps for the RM were also provided. The Open House provided information on how individual action can affect pond health.

Attendee Feedback

More than 30 local residents attended the Open House. The majority of attendees live in the Pritchard Farm neighborhood, followed by Southlands, with other attendees identifying their place of residence from elsewhere in the municipality.

Verbal comments received during the Open House included questions about water quality and opportunities to improve the ponds. Comments were received on the current state of pond health such as the over-abundance of aquatic plants (duckweed and algae), odours from decaying aquatic plants, individual actions affecting water quality such as dumping of grass clippings into the ponds, erosion of the banks, and weedy and invasive plants on the edge of the ponds. Common questions included:

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- *Are there any examples of ponds that have been fixed? (variations on this one were common – has anything ever worked to fix a pond; do ponds always have algae? Etc.)*
- *Why are the aerators not operating this year?*
- *Why aren't the algae and weeds being collected this year?*
- *Are there rules for draining swimming pools/how should swimming pool water be drained?*
- *Why can't water be recirculated (pump it from bottom pond back up to top pond) and would that help the water quality?*
- *Can the ponds be flushed and would that help the water quality?*
- *Why is the water so low and can anything be done to help that?*
- *Are there new rules for the new ponds so they won't develop algae?*
- *Were the Eagle Creek ponds constructed too shallow? Would it help if the ponds were excavated?*
- *Why do the ponds have odours?*

Three of the presentation boards (boards 15, 16 and 17) gave attendees the opportunity to provide feedback on actions that the community would like see or participate in to improve the ponds. One board asked residents about their preferred method of receiving communication from the RM on the ponds in the future (Attachment 1).

Attendees also had the option of providing feedback via a Participant Survey (Attachment 2). Six (6) Open House Participant Surveys were completed representing approximately 20% of attendees.

The majority of responders indicated that the Open House helped them obtain a better understanding of the pond system (Q1 - *How did the information change your view or understanding of how the creek and ponds function?*). Most respondents noted that the information changed their thinking about yard care practices with several stating that they would try to fertilize less and contact their lawn care companies to inquire more about the impact of their products (Q2 - *Based on the information presented, do you think you will be changing your yard care practices? and what measures are you thinking of?*). On questions regarding their impressions of the Open House (Q3 – i.e. *How did we do today?*), the majority rated the Open House overall as “good” or “better”. A few respondents also noted interest in forming a neighborhood creek association (Q5). A detailed summary of the responses to the Participant Survey is found in Attachment 3.

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Attachment 1

Presentation Board Feedback

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Several of the boards also provided sticky notes to write feedback or dots to vote on preferred actions. The results were as followed

What future actions would you like to see?

Reponses	# of responses supporting actions
Paint the storm drains (reminding where the water drains)	2
Creek Cleanup Party	2
New development bylaws:	5
Naturalize pond banks	5
Neighborhood pond associations	2

Additional comments included:

- Pond neighborhood watch
- Discourage use of artificial fertilizers and pesticides
- Inspection, education and enforcement.
- Discourage having turf grass lawns in general
- Stop pool owners from draining into ponds (should go into sewer and charged a fee if need be)
- Use mosquito larvae tablets to kill larva and no harm done to plants and pond life.
- Provide anonymous ways to report violations so people can be educated and stop action.
- Install pump systems in ponds to keep water circulating and stop the stagnant water
- Fine offenders who dump clippings, etc. into the ponds.

What information would help you support pond health?

- What plants, bushes and trees to plant to help not only the pond area, but the whole development to keep our area clean.
- Give pool owners a proper system to drain and backwash pools.
- Drainage to ponds from development needs to be open. Lots have been closed.

How can the RM best engage you and your neighbors regarding the ponds?

Website	2
Email blast	3
Community Newsletter	5
Surveys	1

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Attachment 2

Open House Participant Survey

Open House Participant Survey

Q1 How did the information change your view or understanding of how the creek and ponds function?

Q2 Based on the information presented, do you think you will be changing your yard care practices? and what measures are you thinking of?

Q3 How did we do today?

Question	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	No opinion
Overall how would you rate the Open House?					
Was the Open House well organized?					
Was the Open House held at a time that was convenient?					
How effective was the Open House at providing information on the subject?					
Was the information understandable?					
How effective was the Open House at providing opportunities for feedback?					
Was the team approachable?					
Was the team knowledgeable?					

Q4 Is there anything else you would like to share?

Q5 Would you be interested in participating in a stewardship association for to work together on supporting healthy ponds and creeks?

Yes! - See our signup sheet at the welcome desk!



Attachment 3

Summary of Responses to Open House Participant Survey

Q1 How did the information change your view or understanding of how the creek and ponds function?

- *Very informative, thank you.*
- *It is a more complex system than the “pond” we see.*
- *Once I go home and read all the slides I will let you know. Glad to hear it will be put on website.*
- *I’m just very happy that to learn that people care about healthy pond ecosystems.*
- *Good overview and discussion.*

Q2 Based on the information presented, do you think you will be changing your yard care practices? And what measures are you thinking of?

- *Limiting the fertilizer and using an ecofriendly one if available. I don’t mow right to the creek but I’ll try to encourage more growth. I’ll talk to my neighbors.*
- *My contribution wont solve the problem, ponds under designed i.e. depth and water movement.*
- *I’ve already been planning to build a pond in my yard but now I think I’m better equipped to do it successfully.*
- *Would have appreciated an actual presentation with PowerPoint. Impossible to read and absorb all info and make intelligent comments about it all.*
- *Will check with ECOgreen about their product and how it might affect the creek.*

Q3 How did we do today?

Question	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	No opinion
Overall how would you rate the Open House?		1	1	3	1
Was the Open House well organized?			3	2	
Was the Open House held at a time that was convenient?	1*			5	
How effective was the Open House at providing information on the subject?		2	3	1	
Was the information understandable?		2		4	
How effective was the Open House at providing opportunities for feedback?			1	4	
Was the team approachable?			2	4	
Was the team knowledgeable?		1	2	3	

**need to start at 7:30, work till 6:30*

Q4 Is there anything else you would like to share?

- *Thank you for addressing this issue. It is very important*
- *People living along the ponds should be educated if necessary by brochures with opening note that taxes will be part of pond improvement if homeowners do not participate in doing their share to restore pond health.*
- *I hope this project to improve ponds is successful. I think it’s wonderful. I also hope this comes in tandem with push against conventional lawns as the fertilizer they require make these issues highly complimentary.*
- *Really appreciate all the councillors and RM people being here. Hope to see more progress and meetings. Would love recommendations on companies for lawns that don’t damage the environment and good to use, or product they use we should avoid.*
- *Geese are major problem, polluting ponds, children covered in ..., who are we more concerned with?*

APPENDIX A

Presentation Boards and Prerecorded Power Point