

City of Fernie

Integrated Pest Management Task Force Meeting

Minutes of a Meeting held at 6:30pm on Tuesday, April 24, 2007 at the Fernie Aquatic Centre
Facilitated by: Lisa Mose of We Connect Project Management

Members Present: Mary Giuliano (Councillor)
Ken MacRitchie (Blackstone)
Jocelyn Thomas (Wildsight)
Marty Hafke (Tembec)
Don Stewart (City of Fernie)
Bill Silversides (Public)
Ray Bryant (Fernie Golf & Country Club)
Cindey Taylor (Cincott Nursery)
Julia O'Shannassy (Public)

Members Absent:
Carla Fraser (Elk Valley Coal Corp)
Dr. Todd Loewen (Public)
Ingrid Sombrowski (IGS Group)

Meeting Purpose:

1. Set ground rules for decision making
2. Pesticide use on City of Fernie public lands
3. Pesticide use on School District lands

Agenda

- Summary of past meetings
- Ground Rules
- Pesticide use on City of Fernie public lands
- Pesticide use on School District lands
- Past Business: List of Exempted Pesticides

ACTIONS: Don, Marty, and Jocelyn will summarize their background information on list of exempted products to email to Lisa, who will email out to the committee.

Summary of Recommendations

1. **Downtown sidewalks, signs, and street lights:** Pesticide free area and continue to control the spread of weeds through hand-pulling. As the downtown core expands, the amount of labour needs to increase to deal with the weeds, or investment in another method that is pesticide free.
2. **Off leash dog parks:** Pesticide free with a 5-metre buffer zone surrounding them.
3. **Daycares, schoolyards, senior's facilities, hospitals, medical clinics, playgrounds, parks, and public recreation facilities:** Pesticide free with a 5-metre buffer zone surrounding them.
4. **Playing fields:** Goal of elimination of pesticides within 5 years through continual reduction by using Integrated Pest Management (IPM) practices and the possibility of equipment sharing with the golf course to improve efficiency.
5. **City Hall/Courthouse/Library:** Goal of elimination of pesticides within 5 years through continual reduction through IPM practices, changing the landscape design, and creating a usage policy.
6. **Cemetery:** Implement an IPM plan, re-landscaping to reduce turf, and installation of irrigation systems by 2008; followed by a goal of elimination of pesticides within 5 years through continual reduction.
7. **Trails, parks, open spaces, undeveloped park spaces:** Pesticide free with a 5-metre buffer zone surrounding them. A healthy habitat is the goal for these areas including returning some of the parks to natural space.
8. **Monitoring:** Upon implementation of the IPM strategy and recommendations, the Task Force should continue to meet to "check-up" on what is happening with the recommendations.

Overview of past meetings

- Overall Goal of the Integrated Pest Management Task Force - Strategy and Recommendation: specific intent on reduction of pesticide use on public and private lands within the City of Fernie
- Review of topics covered during past meetings – see April 10th meeting minutes for the summary

Pesticide use on City of Fernie public lands and School District Lands

Areas in Fernie for potential pesticide use presented by Don for discussion:

- a. **Downtown sidewalks, signs, and street lights** – the city has applied pesticides in the past to keep downtown looking clean – currently there are two employees that hand pick when needed instead of pesticide use – this is not a feasible option for areas outside of the downtown core due to lack of time and manpower
 - Past action – applied roundup at the base of telephone poles in the morning – this is no longer used. Using the employees to hand pull is not a more expensive option.
 - Is this control downtown for aesthetic or practical purposes? Lots of aesthetic reasoning specifically for business owners – is this then for cosmetic purposes only? Yes.
 - “Green lawn” does not mean the colour green lawn – education is needed to change people’s perception of “green spaces”
 - Downtown area of Fernie will be increasing another few blocks as 901 Fernie is completed; as the town expands, the issue of continuing to hand-pull weeds will be harder to deal with
 - Has the pulling by the employees been more effective than the roundup? Yes – they are there 5 days a week, and the hand pulling is more effective than the pesticides.
 - Options for killing off weeds – steaming with a machine
 -

Recommendations to City Council – Continue to control the spread of weeds while keeping the method pesticide free. As the downtown core expands, the amount of labour needs to increase to deal with the problem.

- b. **Off Leash Park** – used to be minor ball field and the city converted this to a dog park. There have been no pesticides applied to this park in the last 3 years since minor ball collapsed.
 - Use caution when using the term pesticide – not all of them are “bad”
 - Grass in this park is very thick due to dog fertilizer, and it is very difficult for the weeds to grow. A very good example to the residents that it is possible to have pesticide free areas. In the springtime, the city mows the grass here once a week.
 - Dog-owners are encouraged to pick up after their dogs
 - Discussion of recommendation: dog parks should be pesticide free – committee agrees – does this mean inside the fence or should there be a buffer surrounding the area? Discussion around what the size of buffer should be – the licensed applicator and staff spraying around the area will have to leave a sufficient buffer based on the winds, and what their usual spraying regulations are – invasive weed treatment is exempt from this pesticide free zone – there can be a suggestion that alternative methods are used for the invasive plants, but based on IPM the herbicides and pesticides are used when all of the other methods have been tried.

Recommendations to City Council – Off leash dog parks are pesticide free and should have a 5-metre buffer zone surrounding them.

- c. **Playgrounds** – pesticides are not applied at or near play structures – Rotary Park, Skate Park, 10th Ave Park, Ridgemont Park
 - Recommended to keep these methods as they are based on the scientific research around negative effects of pesticide use on children
 - The noxious weed controllers use integrated pest management and therefore only use herbicides after all of the other methods of control have been tried
 - What happens if the invasive plants take over the playground areas? Can these areas be dealt with Weed Warriors? Depends on the funds from the city as the program funded by the RDEK is ending this year.

- What is an appropriate buffer zone for playground areas? What about the areas bordered by residential areas? These occupants are not licensed applicators so how will this be regulated? All of these things must be dealt with in the recommended by-laws
- Example from Gibson's by-law, article 8-D includes a 5 metre buffer zone from bus stops - NO, the recommendation can be dealt with when the city gets bus stops, daycares - YES, schoolyard - YES, seniors facility - YES, hospital - YES, medical clinic - YES, playgrounds - YES, parks - YES, and 20m from water – does the committee like the idea of adopting this as a recommendation? Yes, add off leash dog park - YES, add public recreation facilities (aquatic centre, arena)

Recommendations to City Council – Daycares, schoolyards, senior's facilities, hospitals, medical clinics, playgrounds, parks, and public recreation facilities are pesticide free and should have a 5 metre buffer zone surrounding them.

- d. **Playing Fields** – Soccer (school district property) and Slow-pitch fields – Weed and Feed (24D) is used in a blanket treatment on the slow-pitch fields, used to kill weeds because the weed infestation on fields creates pockets that create tripping hazards, this creates potential liability. This will be used until there is increased knowledge on turf management.
- Should there be a recommendation for the phase-in approach to overrun the use of Weed and Feed?
 - Alternative methods are hard to use in an active field – mulching, etc.
 - Fernie G&C Club has equipment that the city can borrow – it has a curtain on it, fast application, product does not stay on the ground as long, use the boom to direct where the product goes
 - Fields are treated once a year with Weed and Feed – signs are put up 24 hours in advance of the treatment and it stays up for 2 weeks afterwards
 - Do we want these pesticides to continue to be used on these sites? What are the options, what does the committee want to recommend? One option: invest in or share the Golf Courses equipment to spread Killex
 - Another option: better turf management to reduce the use of pesticides eventually down to none – long-term elimination by using the pesticides every second year, and in the other years use other methods ex. Over seeding
 - This does not look like a cosmetic use of pesticides, it may be exempt because it is a safety and liability issue
 - Phase in elimination of pesticides over 5 years – spot treating still allowed for safety reasons as opposed to blanket applications.... Strive for continual improvement/reduction in pesticide use from year to year, as long as the amounts are being reduced then the goal is being achieved – the word eliminate is favoured by some committee members
 - Important to have a number of years included and the issue can always be revisited by the city after three or four years to assess the feasibility – there needs to be a benchmark for these properties

Recommendations to City Council - goal of elimination of pesticides through continual reduction on playing fields within 5 years by using better Integrated Pest Management Practices and the possibility of equipment sharing.

- e. **City Hall/Courthouse/Library** – currently Weed and Feed is used once a year on these properties. Used for public perception only, cosmetic only, most photographed grounds in town
- The city wants to lead by example and if the city wants to ban pesticides then they will have to do that with their public grounds – possible to slowly eliminate the use of pesticides by using other integrated pest management options
 - High use areas – man-power is an issue so to add manual pest management might be difficult
 - These lawns are healthy as is, maybe they can do without a year of Weed and Feed, and just some extra seeding – ongoing turf management practices, they can stay healthy. Due to the high-use, the lawns are noticeably different when not treated.
 - These areas are used as playing fields – do they need to stay as fields? The high-use is what damages the grass.

- We can work towards the elimination of pesticides on these areas – landscape design is a way to look at how much pesticide is used in the area, change usage policy for the spaces (the Academy can use the pesticide free Rotary Park and Aquatic centre)

Recommendations to City Council – Through landscape design, usage policy and IPM eliminate the use of pesticides within the next 5 years through continual reduction.

- By using the words continual reduction instead of elimination we are achieving our initial intent of reduction of pesticides – discussion around how to use both terms together.

Recommendation – Monitoring: Upon implementation of the IPM strategy and recommendations, the Task Force should continue to meet to “check-up” on what is happening with the recommendations.

- f. **Cemetery** – spot use of Weed and Feed mainly for the purpose of thistle – extremely poor ground and there is 35 hectares in the cemetery, poor drainage, poor soil, very challenging site, hillside, no irrigation
- Irrigation is planned for 2008
 - Mainly aesthetic purposes
 - Full-time crew of three people for the summer that work there – it is mowed at least once a week
 - Recommendation: allow the city to do spot treatment until the irrigation system is in place??
 - Thistle can be controlled by pulling – so the summer employees can pull it up – Don stated the priorities for the crew is in restoring the historic area and upkeep of the gravesites – this is a cause and effect relationship – possibility of having cemetery clean-up days utilizing volunteers
 - City has the ability to change the by-laws – if the cemetery is full of weeds in five years the by-law of pesticide free can be re-visited – city council may vote against a pesticide free cemetery because of the amount of complaints from the public regarding the look of the area
 - Educating grass-cutting crews so that the length of grass helps with the drainage of the area may help the grounds
 - Possibility of re-landscaping the cemetery area – two weeks ago a cemetery review started by the city – includes landscape design – alternatives – cremation, alternative ground cover for internments
 - Using pesticides by the city is a way to save man-power and time – solution: re-landscaping the area so that there aren’t as many lawns that need herbicides and pesticides to maintain – these areas would need less man-power “nature-scaping”

Recommendations to City Council – The city implements IPM plan including spot treatment and installation of irrigation systems by 2008; followed by the 5 year goal of elimination of pesticides through continual reduction.

- g. **Trails, parks, open spaces, undeveloped park spaces** – there are currently no pesticides used in these areas
- Recommended to go pesticide free without having a buffer – others said there should still be a 5m buffer
 - What to do with the noxious weeds

Recommendation – These areas are to remain pesticide free ensuring a healthy habitat while returning some of the parks to natural space. Pesticides will not be applied within 5 metres of these areas.

List of Exempted Pesticides – this discussion has been post-poned until the next meeting after the committee has reviewed the information being sent out via email.

Action: Don, Marty, and Jocelyn will summarize their background information on products to email to Lisa, who will email out to the committee.

Next meeting is Tuesday, May 8, 2007 from 6:30 to 8:30pm at the City Council chambers.