

Darrell Jessome – BMBCL Submission

Sept. 25, 2020

1. Have you ever visited any part of the BMBCL area?

Yes

2. Commitment to create the BMBCL Regional Wilderness Park

Yes

3. Land Acquisition Strategy

Yes

Comments:

I am a planner and believe in the development of strategy to drive actions. I am supportive of the creation of a municipal land acquisition strategy to better plan the development of park and wilderness space in the future.

4. Support the continued purchase of lands around the perimeter of the provincial wilderness area

Conditional

I am a big believer in the creation of park and wilderness public spaces, but we are also in the middle of a global pandemic. As an accountant and financial planner, I am hesitant to commit municipal finances to the purchase of anything, park land included, without getting a true sense of where the municipality's finances stand in the wake of COVID-19.

Over four-year term, would you push to have BMBCL land acquisition included in the annual HRM budget?

Conditional

As stated above, I am supportive of the purchase of land to support recreational park development when the municipality can afford to do so.

Please provide comments on how you would influence land acquisition

I believe in the creation of useable park and wilderness area space in HRM. I believe that the BMBCL organizers have done a tremendous job at starting to create something that will be a huge benefit to this and future generations.

Land acquisitions can be part of the municipal budget and when it is financially feasible to do so, I will be supportive.

5. If elected, would you push for the creation of this park through a coordinated planning approach and the commitment of HRM staff resources to ensure the opportunity for land acquisition and major access points are not lost?

Conditional

I am supportive of the creation of the park and the development of a strategy around how to complete that initiative. However, the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic fallout from it is my priority. Once we have a true sense of where we stand financially, I am happy to meet and discuss the next steps with the members of the Friends of the BMBCL.

As a whole, HRM Regional Council has shown their commitment to the creation of this park and I can foresee no reason why that commitment would not continue. The major question will be the financial feasibility given the global conditions we find ourselves in. That may impact the time horizon for the creation of the park, but I and most members of Council, would still be committed to the creation of valued park space.

6. Policies to support the establishment of the BMBCL Regional Wilderness Park AND excludes policies that will compromise the future park?

Conditional

I do not support policies that are explicitly intended to compromise park and wilderness space. However, there is a housing crisis in Halifax and development of private lands to address this crisis and grow the economic base of this municipality will need to be addressed as well.

I am a believer in the BMBCL and want to see it completed, but I don't want to set an expectation that I can't deliver on given that we don't have a full appreciation for the economic impacts of COVID-19 or what proposals will come forward to address issues with affordable housing.

7. In-camera meetings, stakeholder engagement, public information

I am not necessarily comfortable with the premise that HRM Regional Council's use of in-camera meetings is intended to leave the public 'in the dark'. Often, land issues need to be discussed in-camera as it involves private property and financial dealings where transactions need to be completed before they can be communicated publicly.

I will commit to being open and transparent with the members of the Friends of BMBCL and meeting with the group to update them on progress at the Council table on a regular basis. As a general principal, I believe in open stakeholder engagement and public access to information.

8. Join us for a guided hike

Yes

9. Powerpoint Presentation

Yes

10. Additional Comments

As a long-time resident of a bordering community, I recognize that the park creation at BMBCL is an important issue for many. The recreational capacity, ecological benefits and sense of community that this part of our municipality enables is something we should be proud of. I'll look forward to working with like-minded stakeholders and community members as Councillor for District 13.