

Edmonton Bicycle Commuters' Society

Monthly Report - January 22, 2013

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Overview

The shops have been fairly quiet over the holidays and through the depths of winter. A relatively small but solid core of volunteers have been holding down the forts. My main focus has been bike building, shop maintenance, and making sure that the shop remains open as scheduled and that there are enough volunteers showing up where & when they are needed. Additionally, I've also been doing a lot of research related to overhauling the volunteer orientations.

What you really need to know:

- I was too ill for the better part of two weeks to work, so the projects I'd planned to focus on over the holidays have fallen behind.
- Bikes for sale in the spring have been moved upstairs at BWS. Quite the pile.
- Leak in the roof over the meeting area at BWS
- Volunteer meeting on January 31st will help determine direction on some upcoming decisions about the operation of BikeWorks

BikeWorks General

Description: Facility Maintenance and Operational Procedures

Review of progress made within reporting period:

- Cleared the "for spring" bikes out of the bike showroom at BWS and moved them to the mezzanine. Crammed 24 bikes into a 10' x 6' area. Not to count chickens before they hatch, but with an average price of \$150 each, that's \$3600 in potential revenue.
- The battle against chaos and an overwhelming supply of crap in the BWS parts room is slowly being won.

Hurdles:

- Mezzanine will probably (hopefully) not accommodate all the bikes we'll build up before spring.
- During the recent thaw, the roof at BWS sprung a significant leak.
- As I wasn't able to paint the floor at BWS over the holidays because of illness, this

task will still need to be undertaken before spring or else we'll have a very ratty looking floor.

- Ice build-up at the bottom of the ramp at BWN

Plans and next steps

- Chris talked to the new contact from the Nigerian Association who gave us permission to take needed measures for fixing the roof and deduct the cost from the rent. We will get the roof professionally cleared if there is another thaw in the forecast and begin looking at options to patch the roof come spring.
- Ideally, because of the amount of paint flaking off, the BWS floor should be stripped before it's painted again. The process of stripping and painting would ideally have to take place over a week. This gives us 2 options: close the shop for a week and move BWS activities to BWN, or do touch ups as best we can while staying open as much as possible with the knowledge that this will have to be dealt with again sooner rather than later.
- Supply BWN with ice melting materials
- Securing other options for spring bike sale storage - could include the meeting room and off-site storage.
- Finish fixing rental bikes that have been sitting on the mezzanine for some time now.
- Work on revamping the rental program in time to incorporate it in the new volunteer training.

Education/Classes

Description: provide learning and training opportunities to volunteers and the general public

Review of progress made within reporting period:

- Wheel building seminar during bike building night turned into a wonderful collaborative learning experience, and will be repeated in February as there were many more volunteers who wanted to come out who's schedules didn't jive.

Hurdles:

- Finding fresh subjects to engage the volunteers who have been regularly attending seminars.

Plans & Next Steps:

- Scheduling another round of seminars on core skills with input from volunteers on what they feel they need help with.
- Scheduling another wheel building night. Perhaps open it up to the general public.
- Scheduling an intensive 7 week mechanical training in addition to the one Chris has scheduled for Monday nights starting on the 29th.
- Though it's certainly the slow season for it, I'd like to test the waters of demand by

scheduling a basic maintenance class with a month or so lead up time. I currently have one enthusiastic person on the waiting list.

Volunteer Coordination

Description: offer volunteer orientations to new volunteers, provide support for existing volunteers

Review of progress made within reporting period:

- The most rewarding thing this month has been watching the level of dramatic increase of knowledge & confidence in volunteers who started with very little of either in the late summer & fall.
- Have been in contact with The Good Life in Calgary to collaborate on & share anti-oppression training materials.
- Researching training methods and materials for “soft skills” and community building to be incorporated into our volunteer orientations.

Hurdles

- Saturdays at BWS still continue to be challenging to staff, not because there aren't enough volunteers, but because it's been difficult to find any to commit to opening & closing the shop on a regular basis.
- I hate to say it but there are too many volunteers (often 5 or 6) on Wednesdays at BWS. I'm worried that volunteers who are motivated by helping people will lose interest because there is little of that type of work to do. .
- Bike building could use more volunteers every night, especially Wednesdays at BWN.
- Because I am usually at bike building and have been spending Saturdays at or near the south shop, I feel I've been losing connection with those who volunteer at the same time at the the other shop.

Plans and Next Steps

- Encouraging Wednesday night BWS volunteers to do alternate weeks or take other shifts, but it is difficult to speak to them as a group because I feel compelled to be at BWN for Bike Building on Wednesdays
- Finish documenting in detail the new volunteer orientation.
- Volunteer meeting to check in and gather input on recent and proposed changes as well as uncover issues I may be missing.
- Organizing another social event or two for volunteers and the wider community.
- Several board members approached me at the board retreat requesting to be

scheduled into regular BikeWorks shifts, and I am immensely grateful for those who've stepped up. I didn't write down who to share the volunteer calendars with, so please let me know if I've forgotten to add you.

A few thoughts on a recent incident

As the board is well aware, a core volunteer's access to BWN was revoked after it was discovered that he had been tampering with the cameras. This has brought up a few things, both directly and indirectly:

- Volunteers are the core of EBC and are more valuable than gold, so restricting access to a contributing volunteer should be an absolute last resort.
- While we aim for consistency through having shop rules and training as well as by giving volunteers equal treatment, it is also important to recognize that each individual is unique, with their own strengths and weaknesses, with their own contribution to make. While we do expect volunteers to conform to our organization, this has to be a two way process where EBC can also be flexible to not only meet the needs of our volunteers, but to help them shine.
- BikeWorks is a community, and BikeWorks volunteers are more than just free labour. Dealing with serious issues and conflicts should be guided by policy so everyone's on the same page as to what to expect, but there needs to be room for the complexities of human relationships.

Specifically in this situation, I was bothered that the volunteer wasn't given an opportunity to tell his side of the story before his access was denied. When I found out what was happening, I emailed him to ask him what was up, but unfortunately I did not get a response. From talking to other people who have talked to him, though, I get the impression that his action of taping over the webcam was provoked by him being uncomfortable with their presence as opposed to covering up unapproved activities in the shop. While this act of protest shouldn't be an acceptable way to express an issue with a decision made by management, it begs two questions:

- On the broad level - What is an acceptable way for a volunteer to bring up issues with what's happening at BikeWorks? While there is the option of talking or emailing Chris or I, either privately or via the listservs, I think there needs to be another formal, explicit channel for volunteers to communicate and collaborate with the decision makers, as well as better ways to involve them in the decision making process.
- On the specific level - How do volunteers feel about the security system and the presence of cameras inside the shops? How would they like to see them used/not used?

As a first step to address these two issues, I have called a volunteer meeting for Thursday,

January 31st at BikeWorks South, starting at 7pm.

Something else that has come up in the subsequent discussion is the possibility of a written volunteer contract. It could be something that is signed at orientation or could be for when a volunteer is granted 24/7 shop access privileges. This is also a topic I would like to be discussed at the volunteer meeting. I'm thinking of something relatively simple and taking inspiration from The Good Life's members' agreement.

On last month's report, I left off with a few big picture questions which I'm going to repeat again because I think that they're important to consider as we make seemingly small decisions about the operation of BikeWorks.

- How can BikeWorks appeal to a wider range of people?
- How can we make BikeWorks a more welcoming and inclusive space?
- How can we better communicate EBC's & BikeWorks' goals to patrons who only see us as a "pick-a-part for bikes?"

Hopefully, after having time to reflect on this, I hope the board can provide some input and ideas. Myself, I am beginning to see that my job is less a manager and more a community builder, and am trying to make decisions and act in ways that reflect that.