

Summary of June Property Planning and Assessment Town Hall Meetings

05/12/2015 (Collinsville); 05/13/2015 (Effingham); 05/14/2015 (Carbondale)

155 Adults and 43 Girls total in attendance.

Conversation #1: When your troop, or the council staff plan for the next year, what kinds of OUTDOOR PROGRAM events, topics, and opportunities do you really hope to see? What programs will girls go to FOR SURE? What programs might they go to? What will not be interesting or attractive?

Hope for/might:

- Summer sizzler at Butterfly – when it moved we quit because of distance and because of what was offered.
- Have multiple events at different camps
- Girls like overnights
- Younger girls 1 overnight
- Teach girls about bugs to lessen fearfulness
- Lifeguard at Butterfly
- Resident camp or something like it
- Fishing; Backpacking; Nature Guided Hikes; Nature Crafts;
- Helping younger troops with events
- More Swim/water time
- Gun range
- Tent Camping
- Outdoor progression badge; workshops for upper levels; Possible highest levels and then girl instructor; family camps
- Photography program
- More sporting (team/game) events
- Togetherness/Community and Camp Traditions
- Frog Giggling, Fishing and Mushroom hunting
- Glow Parties in Lodge

For Sure want:

- Themed programs: Summer Sizzler; Brownie Haunted Camp & Zombie Run
- Day camps
- Camp fires
- Geocaching & other day programs that would not block out troops from reserving camp sites at the same time.
- Basic fun, different and exciting for girl to stand out in mind.
- Weekend older girl camps that do not include helping younger girls
- Journey weekends & other program content, workshops learning useful life skills (wilderness, 1st aid, etc.)

- High ropes, Swimming, horseback riding, camping, hiking, climbing, cook outs, canoeing, Kayaks and Funyaks; Archery; Rappelling; Ropes Course; girls to do their own outdoor cooking, star gazing
- Older girls would like canoe/sail/rappelling
- Pre-teens want “spa like” events
- Fall and spring campout for service unit
- More adventure: shoot guns, sling shots, shooting targets, Archery, rappelling, horseback riding, ropes course, day camps, archery and arts – more “boy scout” type of activities, STEM
- Zip line, canoeing, hiking, archery, outdoor cooking, rock climbing, and play days at camp.
- Camping in cabins/lodges
- STEM Events at camp (candy chemistry, explosion camp, GPS compassing)

Do not want:

- Naps
- No bird watching
- No snakes
- Don’t plan same events on the same weekend
- No repeat programs
- No “classroom” setting
- No holiday weekends
- Parents don’t like 2 nights
- Older girls like full camp experience (dutch oven, tent, etc.)
- Like woods/out of doors
- Like to try different cooking, archery, rappelling
- Not interested in clean up
- NOT Whispering Oaks, Patrol boxes and limited size lodges
- Not attractive: Latrines, mixing ages broadly in programs.
- Not attractive: air conditioned cabins – that takes the fun out of camping experience
- 2 hour hike or survival camp (said by a Brownie)
- Poison Ivy
- No outdoor bathrooms
- Dislike open tents
- Don’t want to be too far away

Conversation #2: For what kinds of programs or events do you use the camp sites in the council? What about the camp is inviting, supports your programs, makes you want to use them more? What makes you NOT want to go back there?

Used for:

- Camping
- Adult camping (alumnae), SU campouts, troop camp outs, work weekends, rappelling/climbing, to get away (adults), to have fun (girls).
- Hiking, overnight/weekend camping, badge work, Outdoor activities we can't do at home
- Council sponsored "themed camps" – Haunted camp; Zombie Run, etc.
- Troop camping, service unit camping and day camps
- Meetings – Service Unit; Troop
- Programs: Sewing day; Stranger/Danger Day; Self Defense Program; STEM; Earth Day
- Trainings: CIT; PA and being out in the woods

Inviting:

- Diversity of camps & set up of cabins
- Anything that makes girls & adults want to come back – good experiences and camaraderie between leaders & troops.
- Caboozes at Butterfly are GREAT!
- Water; offering different lodging; reasonable cost
- Enjoy traveling to a camp that has a lot to offer
- Inviting: outdoors, access to lake, outdoor cooking, hiking new trails, places for camp fires, exposure to nature, weekend in and out door
- Price
- Torqua has a variety of facilities, cabins, rangers, council staff, dutch ovens, and other items available.
- Lakes & Trails! Always something new to learn about each time we come
- Clean
- Making friends at camp and learning about others
- Lodges are good
- Location is close and convenient (Wassatoga)
- Have the things you need here
- Girls want to be outdoors
- Lake and Canoeing
- Quiet area - Therapeutic for all girls & adults
- Traditions, wildlife, outdoors, friends/sisterhood, get away from home, sleepovers, no electronics, platform tents, fun, woods, archery
- Events for older girls to participate in and not work
- Swimming pool at Chan Ya Ta
- Lifeguard available at camp
- Lakes, Trees, trails w/better markers
- Girls invested in camps through involvement in facilities, etc.

- Year Round availability
- Variety of lodging options
- Binder of information including lifeguards & certified adults
- Safeguards without limiting requirements
- Programs in a box
- Unique activities & lodging
- Cast iron, pie iron, etc. – nice to have so you don't have to invest into your own supplies
- Having fire wood ready at the camps
- Variety from Rustic to modern to appeal to all
- Back country campsite (backpacking)

Uninviting:

- Bugs and Ticks
- Outdoor bathrooms & showers
- Platform tents – not attractive would prefer tent camping
- Not being prepared for the experience – stories heard from other girls with bad experiences.
- Resident camp – bad experience
- Bad utilities at Cedar Point
- Not enough cleaning supplies at Wassatoga
- Hard to find a life guard
- Need better archery equipment
- Wide trails
- Butterfly needs bigger swimming area
- Need list of certified people
- Offer more trainings
- Need Year Road usage at Butterfly for winterized camping
- Need Men's bathroom area's to encourage more dad's to come
- Whispering Oaks doesn't offer much to do outdoors
- Torqua – smaller w/fewer cabins
- Poorly made maps
- No central bonfire, amphitheater for all together.
- Platform tents – lack privacy
- Need more diverse opportunities for small groups, for large groups and for older girls
- Bad Smells
- Restrictions and availability of camps
- Leaky roofs on tents
- Dislike the distance you have to haul the canoes to the lake (Wassatoga)
- no A/C; poor shower situation; needs more privacy for showers
- Cultural issues with care in the out of doors
- Maintenance is needed at every camp

Conversation #3: What would be the characteristics of an IDEAL property to serve your troop or Girl Scout? (Property & Facilities (recreation, program, lodging) – Staffing – Other Characteristics)

- Different experiences in the same camp like Butterfly
- Clean water source
- Have people on staff for the certified positions rather than needing volunteers (rappelling/lifeguards)
- Have staff mentors for the 1st time campers
- Large variety like at Butterfly – but needs upgrade to commissary better high adventure
- Torqua – not good because it has less nature – only buildings and good for meetings
- Chan Ya Ta - more variety for younger girls
- Have staff camp list – college kids, certified GS in the area
- Trap or Skeet Shoots – rifle course
- Variety of housing – cabooses/cabins
- Ziplining
- No showers
- Progression camping
- Lodge that can be used to rent out to others
- Handicap accessible
- Discovery Center
- Winter Facility
- Swimming Pool
- Units for more than 20 people
- The more activities the better
- More latrines
- Staffing: Lifeguards, more certified staff to help
- Have a place that is not necessarily a camping facility but a place with internet access and areas for completing journeys, etc. – maybe changing one of the facilities to a place that is a more diverse place for these types of activities.

Conversation #4: Recognizing the challenges and the hopes of people across the council – what creative ideas do you have moving forward with outdoor program?

Improve camp conditions (buildings/showers); Show the schedule (open dates for camps availability); Ability to pay on line; Camp is close to our area; List approved places to take the girl i.e. horse stables; outsourcing programs not available at camp. Girl at a council event; leader being trained in a special area certification

- Sliding scale of fees per girl based on income; create a friends of camp ____ group that meets together and works for money and maintenance at that camp; specific activity only at that camp as a hook to draw girls in; more information out to parents that camps are available for family events, weddings, etc.; A packet to give parents at registration and make the process easier for non GS use.
- Utilize volunteer labor; maybe incorporate a patch for helping; seek funding for projects; solar powered; green ideas; composting; air freshener/Lysol in cabins

- Things to increase usage: Family opportunities; outdoor movie nights for families; Holiday activities; Local partners (i.e. horses); Older girls teach skills to communicate
- Challenges: Distance, Cost of maintenance, cost of building new and outdoor skills – make a progression of out of doors
- Hopes: promoting out of doors to girls/adults; specialty for each camp; work day @ each camp on a monthly basis (specific dates for each work day)
- Hire transportation to the camps. Sports competitions regionally. Sports themed camp. Have more Council-sponsored holiday-themed programs. Mom & me camp or He and Me Camp; Bring a Friend to camp day and Themed event for men.
- Outdoor progression workshop; “Camp Hosts” like national parks – work camper magazine; specific hours of work per person; sliding scale for resident camp; Nonprofit “friends” group for a specific thing like bathroom to include applying for grants; leader and girl skills workshop where certified/trained instructor teaches those skills but leader takes care of troop as a whole; Certain troop takes responsibility for certain camp area “Sponsored by _____” kind of like adopt a highway.
- Moving toward specialized camps; resources too thin – trying to do everything at all camps; maybe progressive camping from easy to more primitive; more high adventure for older girls; more interaction where little ones see the older girls are taught by the older girls.
- Incentive program for troops/groups to do work at camps (staining cabins, etc.).
- Bring in more adventure (zip lines, etc.) to draw people
- Slideshow to give leaders an idea of what’s really available at each camp
- Make it known that equipment is available from Council (telescope, slingshots, gps, etc)
- Camp Property tower at one site for Wi-Fi access (rent space to Charter, AT&T, etc.)
- Something special about each camp
- Things to do around each camp, list of community activities/attractions. Service Units make a list of things to do and give to Council. Basically where is everything in the community
- Focus specifically on program mission statement – specific camps... specific programming
- Camps geared to specialties (ex. Butterfly = high adventure; Torqua = Technology)
- Adopt a horse Program – GS responsible for during the season then families take horse home after season.
- Transportation issues – use our “Dad” resources
- Serve all populations
- Large Facility for big projects
- Internet - Wi-Fi with password protection
- Pool
- Service Unit Campouts – mentor each other
- Camporee – to help troops learn to camp
- 1st time camper troop help from Council
- Broaden our expectations for girls: remove the “I’m a girl” limitation
- Would like to see more programming available in duplicate at each end of the region (i.e. an art program at Carbondale to also be available in Edwardsville area – too far to drive for 2-3 hours of a program)
- Team building - More bring a friend activities

- Advertising facilities with GS and community
- Allow more impromptu use of properties with on line reservations program
- Collaborate: What facilities are available in our community without having to raise the funds to do it? GS Council contact these facilities to take advantage of what's available.
- Camps that are themed: If you want this, then go here... if you want that, then go here...
- Badge programs for horseback
- We want it all in one place – some of our girls are going to other councils camps because they offer it all in one place.
- Improvement in communication between volunteers and staff
- Access to camp stuff; Knowledge of camp procedures and things we can use camps for; advertising; Handicap accessible; Camp Improvement days with volunteers and donations to complete projects; camp visit day (registration at the camp); tours; Incentive in cookies sales to pay for camp for girls in troops.

If the Board decides that any of the properties is not in the right location, or doesn't have the right characteristics to meet future needs, how should that decision be communicated and implemented?

- The report by Kaleidoscope should be publicized as well as the statistics and demographics that were used. We would also like a detailed explanation of the finances in person and explained what are the expenses to keep our camp open? What are the donations given by local companies or Effingham United Way?
- Trickle down from the top!! Be told personally that the camp will be closed. It should be held at that camp and given details of why it closed. If a camp closes we will miss the opportunity to visit it for the first time. GSSI Board and Board Chair and SU Directors tell everyone. Given enough time to visit the camp before it closes. Close it with a BANG! Celebrate the camp and open to past members.
- Every registered family needs to get a letter in the mail explaining the decision. All lifetime members and alumni also needs to get the same information.
- Face to face conversation – not email or facebook post. Give opportunity for a last visit. Do closing ceremony/Program for closing a camp.
- Meetings – be proactive with information. Provide meetings in a variety of areas and state decisions and why. Concerns: cost, availability of camping and campership in other areas.
- It should be communicated directly to adults & children. Resources should be shared directly with camps that remain open. Transparency will be shown to each council.
- Be direct. Show why by finances and resources. Don't pass it off to leaders/volunteers to share the information. Gradual process to allow all scheduled events to be completed... 1 program year.
- Bring us back and tell us about it
- Long range planning – we as troop leaders have to plan long range – council should too
- Leaders have a say in what happens

- Giving leaders solutions to any problems are created by the situation
- Do a committee of people who actually have been to the camp that would help make the decision (I personally don't want someone saying we are closing a camp when they have never set foot in a camp)
- All those voting must visit the camp with leaders present to hear us say what we believe should happen
- Who's on the Task Force? Any leaders? Anyone from our area?
- In person – to sum, who takes to leaders meeting? Who takes to girls?
- Make sure information is shared as task force works through process, invite parents to meeting to announce and/or explain decision because some people will not have paid attention to information.
- Website/Facebook
- Mailing to parents
- Don't do a town hall type of event – it will not be beneficial – the decision has already been made and all it does is give the naysayers a chance to be negative and rehash a moot point.
- No decision should be made without member input – if it is decided that something should be closed, town meetings should be held again PRIOR to the final decision.
- Video message of final message to be distributer (website/Facebook)
- Final Ceremony at any closing camp(s).
- Visits to Service Units PRIOR to decision – special meetings that include all members.
- Town meeting format – more than 3
- Not rumored
- CEO/Board Chair to come
- Direct mailing with explanation of how it was determined
- Could there be a time line 6-12 months prior to total closure?
- Create a video or social media of notification by Board President (this is how, why, etc.)
- Give a little time before they close – notice beforehand
- Have a big party – invite all past GS members and counselors as a final farewell
- Why do we have a camp site in another state?
- Area most frequently served by camp be a decision first
- After decision is made arrange an opportunity for all to see all remaining camps
- Transportation from some central point to camp
- Why camps were chosen to close and why other were chosen to stay open
- Resources for areas that has a camp closed
- “Resource Guide” in community
- Equipment to check out such as tents, etc.
- Face to face – different locations
- Face to face – one place *
- One message not piece meal – stop rumors
- Make it a celebration not a doom/gloom and not an apology

- I think that if a decision is made to close a camp, a Board Member should personally attend each and every service unit and explain how and why the decision had been made. I also hope that the board takes into consideration which camps gets used the most and not just by Girl Scout Council.
- I feel that, should a decision be made to close a camp (I would hope it be one of the 2 least used camps), that a member of the Board personally deliver this news to each service unit at their service unit meeting. It should not be merely posted on the website or even emailed to the service units. It should be handled with a more direct approach to all the leaders.
- I believe that town hall meetings should be the delivery option of 'the plan'. They should all be planned on the same day so the plan is relayed equally to the membership.