

Report on Oct. 13 Regular Sooke City Council Meeting.

Note: I watched the first two hours of the meeting; Hester did the remaining two hours (!!).

The Mayor and all council members, except Logins, were in attendance. St. Pierre attended remotely.

I observed (5.1 – 5.2) the consideration of zoning amendments, (7.) a request for support from council for the Harmony `drive-in` project, (8.) the CAO Report, (9.) Public Questions and Comment and finally (12.1) another zoning bylaw amendments issue, moved up from its position in the agenda.

5.1 A resident on Ludlow Rd. Requested a bylaw amendment to permit the construction of a second dwelling on the 1 acre lot in an RUT zone. The dwelling was for a relative and family. CAO was highly in favour, stating that no precedents for allowing this were to be set by this particular case, in response to Beddows concern about this. Moved/seconded by Bateman/St. Pierre. Passed unanimously.

5.2 A request for a variance on signage requirements for Westwind Co-housing. They wanted bigger than allowable, and closer to roadway than allowable signs directing vehicles to parking. Passed unanimously.

7.1 Harmony Project Wanted council to support movie and concert in a drive-in venue at Seaparc for Halloween Eve. Requested \$2600 to cover set-up expenses. McMath was concerned that there did not seem to be a mechanism for organizers to (partially) repay council from their proceeds (\$15/car for 50 cars, total \$750). Mayor and several councilors argued that council should NOT be paid back in this particular case; that the event was a community event and no one was making money. McMath withdrew objections and the motion was passed unanimously.

8. CAO report The CAO announced that he would soon have more to say on: Council budget; John Philip's Memorial Park redevelopment; Lot A development; Sooke Region Health expansion.

12.1 (The Biggie) Council was asked by developers of the new housing on Church and Wadams Way to approve their latest version of the project. It involves the construction of 132 new units of housing in the currently vacant lot at that location. Of that total, 54 would be single family dwelling; the remaining would be strata town houses. The mayor outlined the issues of concern:

1. The latest version dropped the round-about at the corner of Wadam's Way;
2. Is the park in the development for the use of the town-house dwellers only?
3. The lot size reduced from the zoning requirement of 350 sq. meters, to 250 sq meters- thus no room for garden, play area;
4. Since carriage houses are part of it, what prevents those from being rented out?

A long discussion ensued, with comments from councilors, mayor, CAO and the developer.

St. Pierre, Bateman and McMath liked the densification aspect and praised the boldness of the plan and the work that went into developing it. But would prefer tweaking it so that decent communal space could be provided, by either reducing number of units or by making it more `apartment-like.` Bateman was concerned that the 352 parking spaces provided was insufficient. McMath was concerned about only having one entrance. All were concerned about traffic issues during rush hours at the intersection of Sooke Rd. And Church. The mayor would like to see childcare provided onsite. There was general concern about developer not providing any low cost, affordable, housing. Beddows generally

opposed to the project, on the grounds that people who buy single family homes WANT more space than provided by having a 1500 sq. foot house on 250 square metres.

The CAO suggested that for the developer, time is of the essence, and that the project would be at risk if approval was dragged out.

The developer was asked to address council's concerns. First' he said that time is indeed of the essence, and that they worked within the parameters provided by original zoning of the lot, and the overall precedents for development in Sooke. He patted himself on the back for the clever idea of having vehicle access via back lanes rather than a street. He said that providing childcare would be too expensive. He said that increasing lot size would drive up the price. He emphasized that the developer would pay the city \$130,000 in lieu of providing any low-cost housing. He provided no figure on approximate price of the units.

Beddows wants to send it back to developers to provide childcare, address traffic issues, provide affordable housing.

The mayor would like there to be more consideration, but without jeopardizing the project. She suggested that council approve first reading, with expectation that council's issues will be addressed by the developer. The CAO suggested that the developer can do trade-offs, e.g., provide childcare facility if lot size stays small.

First reading moved/seconded by St-Pierre/Bateman. Passed, with Beddows dissenting.

Following is Hester's report on the last half of the insanely long Oct. 13 Council meeting.

11.3 Presentation of Report on the Climate Action Committee Workplan.

Ms Hooper is the presenter. The plan would have significant consequences for the budget and staff workload. Staff have reviewed it and want the CAC to prioritize the items.

11.4. Parks and Trails Master Plan, 2020

Not clear who it was presented by, perhaps Ms Hooper. The first draft of the plan was presented at Committee of the Whole on June 23, and which Hester Vair and Jo Phillips wrote a report for Transition Sooke.

This revised version has a few changes. Two issues raised by Jeff Bateman in June did have a response in this version of the plan: 1) The need to have viewscapes from cars is now included in the plan; 2) Jeff's concern that there needed to be some programming in the parks was met with the suggestion that staff would like to see SEAPARC mandated to do programming. Another revision that was mentioned was an increased emphasis on mountain biking as a response to public input.

Megan McMath asked about mechanisms for staying on track, and the response was that the plan will be updated regularly and staff will report annually on what they are doing.

The estimated cost is 19 million over 10 years.

11.5 Transportation Master Plan

This plan was also initially presented in June, and Hester Vair & Jo Phillips reported on it for Transition Sooke. Staff report that they got a lot of feedback on the report. They said that the core elements of the plan are untouched in this revision – it is not clear how that statement fits with the report of lots of feedback. One revision that was mentioned was strengthening the language stronger to reflect public comments.

Jeff Bateman asked if the estimated traffic increase, from 20,000 to 25,000, was low. This may be a concern if the Plan is based on a faulty estimate. Staff responded that question should be asked of the consultants. Maja Tait responded that COVID-19 may have changed the way people work.

15. Council Verbal Reports. Al Beddows is the liaison for the Committee for the Official Community Plan and he reported on this work. He said that both he and the committee would like to have a stronger role in the Official Community Plan. Originally the consultants suggested that the Committee would be a sounding board for the consultants and would be meeting only 6 times. Beddows implied that the consultants were willing to expand the role – but he wasn't very clear or specific on this.

He did mention that the committee would like to increase the public involvement, and they are working on how to do this. Issues mentioned were: 1) a possible Sooke-wide mailout (suggested by Jeff Bateman); 2) the possibility of meeting the public in COVID times, perhaps in the community centre; 3) the problem with depending on an internet based public response.