

Watchdog Report on Sooke Council Committee of the Whole Meeting

Monday, October 19, 2020 @ 1:00

Hester Vair for Watchdog Committee, Transition Sooke.

Al Beddows chairing the meeting, Mayor Tait attending by phone. Also present: Jeff Bateman, Megan McMath, Tony St-Pierre, & Dana Lajeunesse. Chief Administrator Officer Norm McInnis

Item 4.1 Delegation from SRCHN on the Proposed Elders Complex for Lot A - Sooke Region Community Health Network (SRCHN): Kaeley Wiserman, Mary Dunn, & Rick Robinson.

I will omit the details on this item because, although the design of livable and sustainable cities is of interest to Transition Towns, we do not have a working group that specializes in this topic. There was a debate about where to put the senior centre. SRCHN would like it moved to a lower grade further back on the lot to provide greater ease of access to the building; the city staff were not in favour. Council will take more time to look at the report from SRCHN, and has asked for a more detailed staff response. I have notes on this item if anyone is interested in more detail. Contact hvair@telus.net

A hint about how Council is working with staff.

This incident may be insignificant, but I report it in case Watchdoggers see evidence of tensions between staff and council in the future. In a discussion on the previous item, McInnis mentioned that rezoning was in the works and McMath questioned this, noting that staff had asked for this earlier and been refused by Council. Council asked staff to report why they need to have it rezoned now.

Land Use and Development Committee Terms of Reference (pdf with more detail available with the agenda on the Council's webpage for meetings.)

The terms of reference would change what this committee will do and how members will be chosen.

- There is a broad range of issues that the committee would report on, some of which are Transition Sooke issues. "The intent of the new Land Use and Development Committee is to provide recommendations to Council regarding land use policies and development procedures, with focus given to the implementation of statutory plans/local area plans/master plans, housing policy, sustainable development practices, environmental policy, harbour improvement, farmland protection, and maintaining compatibility of building bylaw regulations and the zoning bylaws."
- The list of people to be on the committee leans heavily to business (for example, home builders group and land development); however it does include representation of both farming community and those concerned about climate change. Staff said that they wish the committee to have good representation on it so that no particular interest would trump another.
- I would question the lack of a committee member with a specific focus on growth and sustainability.

Community Economic Development Committee Terms of Reference (pdf with more detail available with the agenda on the Council's webpage for meetings.)

- The committee is to include a good variety of stakeholders: T'Sou-ke First Nation, Chamber of Commerce, Tourism Association, & the Museum & Visitor's centre. As in the previous item I

didn't see any committee member representing the section of the community with a focus on growth and sustainability.

- Jeff Bateman questioned that there was no slot for the local development group. I found the answer from McInnis too unclear to report.
- Staff reported that said the priority was to hire Community Development Officer who is oriented to more than economic concerns, but is interested in the way 'economic development affects the quality of life in the community'.
- McInnis, was very firm on this and said that there are good programs training people in this area and they should be able to find a good person.