

**Watchdog Report on Sooke Council Regular Council Meeting
Monday, June 14, 2021
Hester Vair for Watchdog Committee, Transition Sooke.**

Present at the Meeting

Mayor Tait chairing the meeting. Councillors attending: Al Beddows, Jeff Bateman, Tony St-Pierre, Ebony Logins, & Dana Lajeunesse. Absent: Megan McMath, Staff present: Chief Administrator Officer Norm McInnis, Matthew Pawlow, Director of Planning and Development , and Carolyn Mushata, Corporate Officer

Items in this watchdog report: Two development applications, a presentation on food security, a difficult discussion on the issue of charging farm stands for business license, the report of the Chief Administrator, and a discussion about returning to council chambers.

Also on the agenda, but not in this report were: a change in Sooke's emergency dispatch services, the raising of a T'Sou-ke First Nation flag at the municipal Hall, the schedule for closing the gate to the Sooke Potholes Park, facilitating Oceanside Brewery's application with the Liquor and Cannabis Regulation Branch (LCRB) for a lounge and outdoor patio, plans for a community post-covid party on Sept 11-12. If you wish to know more about an item, I have full notes for all the items.

7.1 Development Permit 6735 Eustace Road

This was non-controversial; however, Councillor St-Pierre's question (see 2nd bullet point) about council's ability to refuse development might be of interest to Transition Sooke.

- There was a request for a development permit on 6735 Eustace Road (beside Mom's Cafe). The developer plans to put up a two-story building with a nail salon on the ground floor and residence above. Staff (Matthew Pawlow) presented the proposal with a recommendation to accept. There was little discussion on this proposal by the councillors and there were no members of the public wishing to speak on it. The proposal fits the planning bylaws for future density in the area, and also includes a number of green components - including energy conservation, the addition of trees along the road, inclusion of bike parking spot, and the conservation of natural green spaces.
- Transition Sooke members interested in the possibility of reducing growth in Sooke might be interested in hearing that St-Pierre asked if, since the proposed development fits the bylaws, how would it be possible to deny permission, supposing councillors wanted to. Pawlow responded implying that it wouldn't really be possible - he said staff would want clarification about how councillors felt it did not fit the bylaw guidelines and then staff would go back to the applicant to get them to alter the proposal to meet the guidelines. If a proposal fits the guidelines, it is not really possible to deny it.
- St-Pierre said he was happy to see permeable pavers, asked about possibility of a rain garden and about EV chargers. Matthew Pawlow responds that neither of these are in the bylaw guidelines. Bateman suggests that the developer be asked if they could include them, because the District 'strongly recommends them', and Pawlow agrees, but pointed out it would be on a voluntary basis.

9.1 Delegations: Sooke Region Food Security Report.

Presented by Christine Bossi from Sooke Region Communities Health Network (SRCHN)

- Food security is an issue in Sooke. An extensive report (100 pages) can be found in the agenda package online. Bossi pointed out that this is one of a number of reports SRCHN has been doing on issues in Sooke and these are useful background for anyone writing a report or applying for a grant. She points out that what is really needed for food security is an equity lens in all public policy.
- The report covers a number of topics of interest to Transition Sooke, for example, food waste, and it contains a list of potential initiatives on food security that might be inspiration for Transition Sooke members interested in the topic. Transition Sooke might be interested to know that the report notes that, “The T’Sou-ke Nation, working with three other First Nations in BC, is starting a three-year assessment of how to build Food Resiliency in the face of climate change looking at traditional resources.”
- The report was accepted with appreciation by all council members.

Report of Chief Administrator Officer, Norm McInnis

- McInnis reported that the grant for the community centre on lot A was unsuccessful, but until SEARCHN has met with BC Housing they won’t know why.

13.2 Requiring Farm Stands to Have a Business License.

At a previous meeting Council could not come to an agreement on requiring farm stands to have a business licence, which costs \$50, and the issue was sent to the Advisory Committee on Economic Development. Lajeunesse is the liaison with this committee and he reported back that they recommend every business, including farm stands, should have a license. This issue generated significant debate. Motion passed with Beddows and St-Pierre opposed. The issue of the fee will return later because it is part of a different bylaw, the fees and charges bylaw which will come up in a future meeting..

- Beddows said that the people this would affect would find this to be a hardship, and given the presentation on equity issues around food security, felt that we should not require a license of people who may be struggling with their farms.
- St-Pierre said that the function of business licenses are to ensure public safety and public accountability, but that neither of these are important to farm stands. It is a backward step because people working farms need support.
- Logins argued that the bylaw would be equitable but an exemption is not because there may be other businesses that are also struggling, such as home-based businesses. She suggests that helping people make their businesses profitable would be a better idea than taking one category, farms, and favouring them.
- Council thought that Logins point about equity was a good one, and a threshold level of income was mentioned in the discussion, but was seen as too difficult to implement.

Return to Council Chambers

Staff recommend a return on June 28th, while continuing to live stream, and an anticipated return to normal in early September with public attendance. Sooke may continue to offer electronic attendance at council meetings (but there was a complication where two meetings would be skipped.) Council decided that they will not return to chambers yet because not all councillors are comfortable with that, and they will revisit the issue.

14.1. Rezoning 2614 Otter Point Road

Presented by Matthew Pawlow. This request fits with the plan for growth in the Official Community Plan and there was no significant discussion on the issue.

- The request is for rezoning from Rural Residential (RU4) to Neighbourhood Rural Residential (RU5) in order to create 5 lots on the 2.1 ha property which currently has one single-family home and four outbuildings. This is within the area identified in the Official Community Plan Bylaw as a Community Growth Area. There is another property beside it which is being developed into single-family lots, and this development will connect up with that. The four lots that will be created will be 2,500 square metres each. Ten percent of single-family residential subdivisions should be affordable housing, and cash or land in lieu is acceptable and, in this case, the developer has volunteered to pay \$12,000 to Sooke's affordable housing reserve fund. Cash will be also accepted in lieu of land dedicated to parks.