

Watchdog Report on Sooke Regular Council Committee

June 28, 2021

Hester Vair and Jack Gegenberg for Watchdog Committee, Transition Sooke.

Councillors Present: Mayor Maja Tait, Jeff Bateman, Al Beddows, Ebony Logins, Dana Lajeunesse. At some point before the half way point Megan McMath joined the meeting.

First half of the meeting watchdogged by Hester. I apologise that I forgot to insert the time on the video for each item - someone suggested this and I said I would do it. Jack noted them in the second half.

Tait opened the meeting with remarks about her sense that despite significant challenges in the last year - the challenges of COIVD and the critical importance of reconciliation - all members of council and staff are 'holding strongly together'.

Open Public Hearings

Item 7.1 Public Hearing on Zoning Amendment bylaw to allow the building of homes for family members on agricultural land.

Not a contentious issue, and mentioned before in these reports.

- The intent is to alter our bylaw to allow for the building of an additional dwellings on farms in the Agricultural Land Reserve. The Agricultural Land Commission allows this, but our bylaw is stricter - it requires that an extra dwelling must be for farm workers. This was investigated by the Land Use and Development Committee and was discussed at previous council meetings.
- Presented by Matthew Pawlow. He pointed out that this was initiated because several people needed additional buildings for family, but the zoning did not allow it.
- Two public comments were both positive.

Item 7.2 Variance on the Development Permit for the Sports Box in Sunriver

The sports box development was mentioned at the Transition Sooke Town Hall on Growth. Some of the information given there was mistaken.

Presented by Matthew Pawlow. The presentation is available in the online agenda package.

- The District of Sooke and SEAPARC (with input and some money from Sunriver) are developing a multi-use sports box on Philips Road in Sunriver on land the District acquired in 2015. The land is zoned P2 - Community Facilities. The sports box will be used for lacrosse, basketball, ball hockey, futsal, and community events. They intend to build a public washroom and trails - but at a later date.
- The variance on the development permit is required because the budget for the project is very tight and all of the bylaw requirements cannot be met at this time (costs have gone up since initial grant application in 2018, and the grant was not awarded until 2020). In order to get the sports box up and running, the variance would allow for
 - Landscaping and screening requirements to be lifted so these can be done in a later stage.
 - Paving the driveway and parking area will not be required at the moment (gravel

surfacing will be used instead.

- Uncovered bicycle parking will be allowed.
- Council was happy to allow the variances, saying that the project had been in the works for a while and should be begun before the costs rose any higher.

Questions from councillors and residents' concerns - Cutting of trees, storm water, wildlife, washrooms, possible trail improvement, landscaping and problems with noise.

- Beddows referred to something said at the Transition Sooke Town Hall on Growth which he wanted to clarify because he thought it was an error. (Beddows did not mention the error was mentioned in a Transition Sooke event, and only referred to 'a meeting he was at recently' but he happened to be in my small group at the Town Hall, so I caught the reference.) He asked if it was true that a significant number of trees (50 or 60?) were to come down to build the sports box. Laura Hooper, Manager of Parks and Environmental Services for Sooke, answered that no trees would be removed in construction of the sports box, and some small trees would be removed in the making of the parking lot. Beddows asked if Laura Hooper could give him, and any members of council, a tour of the site so he could be clear about what would be happening (other councillors and concerned neighbours were added to the plans for a tour during the discussion).
- Bateman brought some residents concerns forward:
 - some residents were concerned about storm water management. Mr Andy Liu of Ryzuk Geotechnical, the project engineer, replied that they were aware of the current problems with storm water and would not exacerbate them and possibly might be able to help;
 - another resident was concerned that the storm ditch was a wildlife corridor. Liu said that there would be improvement to the wildlife corridor only if there was money available.
 - a neighbour was concerned that the washroom, which might be a pit toilet, would be very close to her property. Mr Liu said 1) the exact location of the washroom was not fixed and the current location on the site map may change; 2) if it was to be, or become in the future, a flush toilet would have to be located close to existing sewers; 3) to put the washroom far from the houses would very likely affect accessibility by the handicapped, which is not acceptable.
 - The trail improvements that are planned are significant and would connect to other trails in Sooke; however the trails are not the initial priority and are contingent on funding.
 - A couple of residents, who spoke at the meeting were very concerned about postponing the noise screening landscaping, and the location of the toilet. Pawlow replied that there was no budget at the moment for sound screening or landscaping.
 - Sooke District has a map of the development on the webpage about the project: <https://sooke.ca/district-services/departments/parks-and-greenspaces/multi-use-sport-s-box/> . A resident said an updated map should be available and council agreed.

Council response to residents' concerns - Council, particularly Tait and Beddows (Chair of SEAPARC) - were full of reassurances that they would do all that they could to keep the

residents in mind and work with staff to see what could be done.

Item 7.3 2020 Sooke District Annual Report

The annual report is available in the agenda package. I did not read the report closely, but it seemed to me to be a clear and accessible description of Sooke through the work of the staff and district council. As would be expected, it is neither critical nor analytical, but it is informative. On page 8 of the report there are some interesting statistics about Sookians - general demographics, working lives, and commuting habits.

Item 10.1 Correspondence. Lajunesse proposes that Council support a request from MP Peter Julian to endorse his motion in Parliament against hate crimes.

This item is interesting both as an example of how councillors work together and their willingness to take a political stance on hate crime. Peter Julian, and NDP MP for New Westminster-Burnaby, is proposing both a motion in Parliament (Motion M-84 Anti-Hate Crimes and Incidents) and legislation (Private Member's Bill C-313 Banning Symbols of Hate Act) on symbols of hate, and he wrote asking the District of Sooke for endorsement. Lajunesse would like Council to endorse Julian's motion and proposed legislation as requested.

Council Discussion : Initially Beddows was opposed to endorsing the request, saying that symbols of hate could be very subjective and might be misused - his example was that perhaps some might consider the star of David a symbol of hate, or First Nations could conceivably see the Christian cross as a symbol of hate. He suggested that it be 'left to the feds'. Bateman asked if he could read the text of Julian's motion (which is inserted below) - and after he did Beddows immediately changed his stance - "Bad on me for not reading the whole thing. I thank Bateman for doing that." Lajunesse in turn said it was not Beddows fault, but his own for not providing more information when he motivated his motion. Maja remarked that this was an illustration of her remarks at the beginning of the meeting - that there is good sharing, listening, and willingness to work together in council. A happy moment for everyone.

FYI More details on Peter Julian's motion and a note on the legislation:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should immediately counteract all forms of hate and all forms of discrimination, hate crimes and incidents of hate by:

- (a) working with provinces, territories, municipalities and community-based organizations to put into place a reporting and tracking system for hate crimes and incidents of hate to ensure accurate tracking;
- (b) launching a robust public education campaign across Canada, focused on understanding and behavioural change, that would clearly define inappropriate behaviours and communicate the terrible impacts of systemic racism and the serious impact of racist actions, gestures and verbal abuse, and encouraging Canadians to stand up for others when someone is being targeted;
- (c) ensuring that comprehensive victim services are available to all those who are victims of hate crimes or hate incidents;
- (d) working to eliminate harmful images and stereotypes present in media and cinema;
- (e) strengthening all legislation against hate and introducing amendments to the Canadian Human

Rights Act to ensure that hate speech no longer occurs with impunity; and
(f) ensuring that all federal government agencies and institutions consider the prevention of discrimination and the promotion of diversity as guiding principles of their work.

Below find an excerpt from the letter that Julian sent out re symbols of hate (the weird switch from Julian's voice - 'my Bill', to the third person - 'Julian says', is because the letter is actually written by Julian's Chief of Staff, and she muddled the voice):

My Bill C-313 would prevent anyone from selling and displaying symbols that promote hatred and violence against identifiable groups. Julian says banning symbols of hatred like swastikas or Klu Klux Klan insignia is important for all Canadians to feel safe.

Second half, watchdogged by Jack Gegenberg

Time on the video in parentheses after the item number.

11. Reports (1.32) LUDC (Land Use Development Committee) Report on Secondary Suites: Impacts and Solutions. Follow-up from June 16 meeting.

There were 6 recommendations from the LUDC concerning inspection and enforcement of matters concerning secondary suites. The part of the discussion most interesting to Transition Sooke concerns the problem of limited parking in areas where there is traffic congestion. Should Council direct Staff to change signage to regulate parking in such situations, e.g. by restricting parking to one side of street, or by requiring residents to apply for parking permits. Loggins and Tait were concerned that this is potentially punitive, in that people living in 'illegal suites' could be identified and forced to move out. Both identified illegal suites as part of the way that poorer people can find housing in our community. Council voted unanimously to reject that recommendation.

11.2 Return to Council Chambers (2.10).

In line with 're-opening' province now that pandemic winding down, motion to return to council chambers for meeting (without in-person public attendance) starting at July 12 Council Meeting. Return of public to chambers at council meeting after Sept. 7. Expect to continue to allow for 'hybrid' in-person/virtual attendance by public to be ongoing. Passed unanimously.

12. Bylaws (2.18)

12.1 Zoning Amendment 2020-2182 Church Rd. 3rd Reading. Beddows wants to know what happened with concerns about reduction of plot size from 350 to 250 sq. m. CAO says that information cannot be shared with public. Passed, Beddows opposed.

12.3 Business Licences (2.22) The issue was whether or not farm stands had to pay fees (\$50) for business license. Bateman/Beddows moved that farm stands be required to get business license, but be exempt from fee. McMath and Loggins opposed, on grounds that lots of other businesses will want such exemptions. Tie vote: Bateman, Beddows, Tait for; McMath, Loggins, Lajeunesse against. Hence motion defeated.

Council then passed (Beddows opposed) a motion requiring farm stands to obtain a business license and pay the fee.

15 Council Verbal Reports (3.04)

Beddows reported on OCP Committee meeting held June 28. He said it went well (Lajeunesse and Bateman concurred) and a draft will be available around July 14.

Bateman reported on CAC meeting, and said 'it is all coming together'. Draft of a report will be made public July 19.