

Watchdog Report on Regular Sooke Council Meeting
July 12, 2021
Hester Vair for Watchdog Committee, Transition Sooke.

Mayor Tait chairing the meeting, councillors present: Jeff Bateman, Tony St-Pierre, & Dana Lajeunesse. Absent: Megan McMath & Ebony Logins. Staff present: Chief Administrator Officer Norm McInnis, Director of Operations, Jeff Carter, Director of Planning and Development, Matthew Pawlow, and Corporate Officer, Carolyn Mushata. Someone from the Lions Club briefly joined the meeting.

NOTES

- Throughout this meeting the sound quality was very poor. Often the audio was a string of 5 or so clear words followed by a minute of staccato mumbling. I am unable to report reliably on what councillors said.
- The time on the video is noted in box brackets after the item number. Again, this month - I have been inconsistent with this. Apologies.
- **Navigating these notes to find what is of interest to you** I have arranged the items under four headings: 1. Climate Action, 2. The Official Community Plan, 3. Land Use: Development, Rezoning, Farming Issues, and Community Spaces, and finally, 4. Items I do not think are of direct interest to Transition Sooke.

1. CLIMATE ACTION CAME UP IN THE FOLLOWING 3 ITEMS :

- **Item 8**, In his report to council, Norm McInnes, the Chief Administrative Officer, mentioned that **CRD (Capital Regional District) has a proposal for climate action on electric vehicles which Sooke will support**. Partly inaudible.
 - Other items in his report were mention of the planned community celebration on Sept 18th, if allowed by COVID regulations; a new federal holiday on Sept 30th to support truth and reconciliation, a business walk event (?) as part of public engagement with local economic development.
- **Item 11: CAC member to be standing member of CEDC:** The Community Economic Development Committee (CEDC) recommends that a member of the Climate Action Committee(CAC) be appointed as a standing member of the Community Economic Development Committee. This passed, and there was a very brief discussion with remarks by Bateman and by St-Pierre - which were not audible - but I could see their mouths moving :).
- **Items 9, 11.6 [1:29:12] and 11.9 [2:46:25] Public input protests carbon impact of road construction.** Tenders were awarded to Hazelwood Construction Services for two road construction projects, one on Church Road (highway 14 to Wadams road), and one an 'active transportation' (human-powered walking & biking) project on Otter Point Road. In the Public Question and Comment section of the meeting there was an objection to the carbon impact of road construction projects; in the little I could hear clearly, item 11.2, the Church Road project was mentioned specifically. Someone I believe was called

Mr Wallis made the comments, but this item was mostly inaudible, except for the response from Mayor Tait and Mr McInnis. The Mayor said that the road is not safe as it is for pedestrians and cyclists, and Mr McInnis said that part of the point of the construction is to get local traffic off highway 14.

2. THE OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN

Item 11.7. [2:46] The timeline for the Official Community Plan

As a result of extensive feedback from committees and staff the consultants need longer to put the first draft together. Instead of having a soft launch of the first draft of the new official community plan in August, there will be a full launch for public engagement in September.

3. LAND USE ISSUES - DEVELOPMENT, REZONING, FARMING ISSUES, & COMMUNITY SPACES (7 items)

7.1. Development Permit issued for a significant development at 2182 Church Road (opposite the new library).

- The proposal is for the construction of 78 townhouses, 54 homes; the development will have small green spaces for residents which will be maintained by the strata but will be open to the public, and a public dog park.
- The development ticks a number of green boxes and includes features that look to create a livable community.
- The developer will pay cash in lieu for affordable housing (\$133,000), for park land (?\$), and for a contribution to a future traffic roundabout (\$28,000).
- Ecological issues: There will be 110 trees removed and 378 new trees will be planted. Water from the ditches will be directed into a rain garden and an area of wetland habitat. NB This development has come before council before when it was rezoned. At that time Paula Johanson and Bernie Klassen of Transition Sooke, as well as a number of other citizens, submitted comments or spoke to council and made the point that there were watercourses that ran through the property. The conclusion of staff and the developer's consultants was that these were now merely ditches, because their ecosystem had been destroyed by earlier developments.
- Pawlow says this development is an excellent example of 'infill' development - which I gather means pockets of higher density; he says this development accomplishes this in a way which is 'compatible' with the single family homes already there, and is an example of 'smart growth'. All words in quotations are part of planner-jargon and are not explained in plain English.

Discussion: Bateman asked a question about telecommuting offices in the strata community building; Tony remarks he is sad regarding the loss of farmland but is impressed with the development; Dana asks about accessibility issues because of the stairs to the units; Beddows notes that he is still unhappy about the size of the lots. None of this was fully audible.

Item 12.4 Request for a zoning change to allow a development on 5627 Woodlands Road in North Saseensos which would increase density.

The request is that the zoning be changed to allow the creation of 3 new lots which will be smaller than allowed at present. The request is for first and second hearing of the request and to set up public hearing. Presented by Mr Pawlow.

Further details for the interested:

- The zoning change would be from Rural Residential (RU4) to Neighbourhood Rural Residential (RU5). Pawlow reports report that this area is designated Gateway Residential Land Use in the 2010 current Official Community Plan, that is, it is low density residential, meant to preserve the ‘rural character of the area’, but allowing some ‘infill’.
- The three new lots will be 2,500 m², the fourth lot will be 6,000 m². The developer will provide cash-in-lieu in the amount of \$9,000.00 for 10% affordable housing for residential developments, and cash in lieu for requirement for parks. There will be covenants to address housing tenure restrictions (applicant has agreed there will be no duplexes), offsite works and servicing requirements.

Item 12.5.[2:12] Request for a zoning change for development on 1934 Powliuk Crescent (which is off Caldwell road) to divide a lot into two.

The request is a change in zoning to allow the lot to be divided into two. The request is for first and second hearing of the request and to set up public hearing. Presented by Matthew Pawlow

Further details for the interested:

- One lot will be 351 m² and the other 664 m². There will be cash in lieu in the amount of \$3,000.00 for 10% affordable housing and ‘other necessary works and services’.
- The zoning change would be from Medium Lot Residential (R2) to Small Lot Residential (R3). The area is identified in the Official Community Plan as a ‘community growth area’ and this development will contribute to minimizing residential sprawl. It is within walking distance of the town centre (13 min according to Google, but I would think it an unpleasant walk along the highway). The current neighbourhood is a mix and there are other similar infill developments.

Discussion: Beddows had questions which I could not hear clearly - he is concerned about the potential for increasing density by building duplexes on the larger of the lots. Staff agrees it is possible that this might happen.

Item 12.1 [2.46.25] and 12.2 [1.52:21]: Business licences and associated fees for farm stands.

- This issue has been very contentions at several meetings in the past (including May 10, June 14 & June 28) and returned at this meeting for passage as part of amendments to the two relevant bylaws. Previously, it was agreed that all businesses, including farm stands, would be required to have business licences and to pay a \$50.00 fee. Tonight the first bylaw, requiring all businesses to have licences, passed, with St-Pierre opposed.
- There was a surprising turn with the second bylaw, which would establish the \$50 fee. Mayor Tait questioned the wording of the bylaw and asked why there was no exemption

for farm stands; staff responded that a motion was passed at the June 28th meeting directing staff to write the bylaw as presented. There was no acknowledgment of this by Mayor and council, who seemed to genuinely forget that this was the case and switched their position, directed staff to go back and rewrite the bylaw exempting farm stands from the fee. It seemed surprising that councillors made no reference to previous discussions, and I hope it was a coincidence that the two councillors most opposed to exempting farm stands, Logins and McMath, were not present. In the audio that I could hear there was no reconsideration or even acknowledgment of the arguments made by Logins or McMath at previous meetings. This issue will return once again to council to pass the revised bylaw.

Item 12.3. [2.01:28] Zoning Amendment Bylaw to allow dwellings on agricultural land for other than farm employees. See discussion on May 10th and May 25th reports. Passes with no discussion.

Item 11. [45:32] Proposal to lease part of John Philips Memorial Park to the Lions' Club to Build a Multi-Use Hall

- District of Sooke staff and Sooke Lion's Club have been working (since 2009?) on an agreement that the District will purchase a Lion's Club property on 2008 Murray road (for a future park), and will give a long-term lease to the Lion's Club for part of John Phillips Memorial Park where the Lions will build a multi-use building. The building is planned to include a 300 person hall, a daycare, a concession, offices, and to have an outdoor stage.
- Since this is dedicated parkland there needs to be approval of Sooke residents for the District to proceed with the project. Instead of a referendum, which would cost \$15,000, an alternate approval process is proposed. This process requires electors to indicate they do NOT want the proposed project: if 10% of eligible electors submit a form between Aug 15-Sept 15th indicating they do not approve, then the project fails.

Discussion:

- Beddows is in a conflict of interest as an member of the Lions' Club, and leaves the chambers.
- Council discussed how to communicate the alternate approval process to the public; there was also much discussion about how the Lion's Club building would be used. Councillors agreed that the facility was needed in Sooke.

Item 13.1. [2:20:29] Proposal by Councillor Bateman to make it easier for some commercial uses of the parks.

- Bateman proposes that the District of Sooke's Fees & Services Bylaw be amended to reduce the cost of the permits required to use the parks for some commercial users - those whose activities are 'low-impact / low-risk'. The example was yoga in the park.
 - The proposal was for \$20 hourly and \$200 seasonal permits, and a reduced refundable security deposit of \$200. Current permits cost \$200 a day with a \$500

refundable security deposit and a \$50 administrative fee and proof of \$1.5 million liability insurance.

- Saanich and Capital Regional District Parks have a more affordable fee structure than Sooke. Bateman pointed out that the bylaw would be coming up for significant revision, as suggested in the parks master plan, but that this should be addressed now, given the need for outdoor activities in COVID times.

Discussion:

- There was discussion about how to set the fee structure and how to determine what uses are low-risk and low-impact.
- Mushata, the Corporate Officer, suggested that the proposed bylaw amendment will need a definition of low-risk / low-impact activities, and she also pointed out that the bylaw amendment cannot be done quickly.
- Staff were directed by council to come up with a definition and return the item to council.

4. ITEMS OF LESS INTEREST TO TRANSITION SOOKE (7 items)

The following are items that are less important to Transition Sooke; however, if anyone is interested I have detailed notes and I have also put the time the time was discussed in box brackets so anyone can check the video.

11.2. [43:03] Sooke will ammend flag protocol to include flying a flag representing the T'Sou-ke Nation

Item 11.3 [43:49] the approval of Jeff Mitton as Approving Office under the Land Title Act.

Item 11.5. [1:23:30] District of Sooke will purchase and store rock and road construction material available for future use; this material is currently available because of the work on highway 14 and it is a very good deal (\$285,000 - and apparently worth as much as two million) . A 'rock solid investment', says St-Pierre.

Items 11.6 [1:29:12] and 11.9 [2:46:25] Two road construction projects have been awarded to Hazelwood Construction Services; one on Church Road and one on Otter Point road. These projects are also mentioned in Item 9 under climate change mentions.

Item 11.8. [2.46.25] District of Sooke will assist the WorkLink project which was at risk of failing because of the high cost of underground Hydro servicing. The city will put \$40,000 of the \$57,000 cash in lieu contribution received from Work Link towards off setting the cost of underground Hydro servicing.

Item 11.10 [2.46:25] There are four grants that the District of Sooke will to apply for. These would help with: the two road construction projects, and an asset management program.

Item 14 [2:34:31] Road construction has caused water issues for residents near 17 Mile House. This was not a substantive discussion, but an issue of correspondence - the mayor wishes to direct a resident to the appropriate contact to complain about water issues.