

Community Economic Development Committee (CEDC) Meeting Jan 28, 2022 (via Microsoft Teams)

In attendance: Ryan Chamberland, Christina Bossi (chair), Doni Eve, Doug Wittich, Mike Menard, Jeff Frank, Elizabeth Lange, Chandra Frobel (DoS Corporate Services Assistant), Christina Moog (DoS Communications Coordinator), Katherine Lesyshen (DoS Senior Planner), Matthew Pawlow (DoS Director of Planning and Development), Dana LaJeunesse (DoS councillor), Norm McInnes (DoS CAO), Bill Corsan (City of Nanaimo), yours truly Jo Phillips, madly taking notes as accurately as possible. Any mistakes are unintentional and my own.

Agenda details: <https://sooke.civicweb.net/document/66826>

N.McI: **Changes in the DoS:** CEDC is moving to Planning and Development under jurisdiction of Matthew Pawlow. They are recruiting for a new position to replace Sue Welke (former DoS Economic Development Officer). **The Employment Lands Strategy needs to be the focus of the CEDC and is the most important thing for the committee to complete before their mandate ends in August 2022**

Presentation by Bill Corsan, Director Corporate and Business Development with the City of Nanaimo. He described what seemed to be several incarnations of economic development committees in that city: Prosperity Corporation, Mid-Island Business Initiative (privately funded), Economic Development Task Force (current) which has 13 members: 2 councillors, First Nations, VIUniversity, airport, Chamber and 5 members at large. It is jointly owned by the City, Airport, Chamber, Port Authority and VIU so that business, government, First Nations and community partners can work together. They had in the past focused on business attraction but not on business retention. They will now be focusing more on retention. (Tourism is separate; Tourism Nanaimo Society has 16 members)

Questions:

D.W.: 1. How do you attract and retain businesses? Ans: We are not doing it yet 2. What about supply chain issues? Ans: We try to keep things local and use the “donut economy”.

D.E.: Why don't you feel business attraction is a priority? Ans. We didn't have our house in order here. The DoS is doing the right things by focusing on Employment Lands Strategy.

R.C.: Appreciates the idea of focusing on retention and local businesses; Sooke Tourism Association has hired a company to engage their membership. How to help attract and retain? Ans.: It is important for people to know who to contact in City Hall to address any concerns.

N.McI.: 1. How do you see not-for-profits; they are not on your boards? Ans. (sort of): non-profits have to get a business license so the City can “know what's out there”. 2. We follow LCR here in Sooke; how much does climate change factor in in Nanaimo? Ans.: it doesn't really yet.

C.B.: 1. Do you have a home-based business strategy? Ans.: We have some regulations around parking, noise, size. There has been a big increase in HBB over Covid - several hundred a month. 2. How does it figure with Nanaimo being a satellite of Vancouver and with Sooke perhaps being a satellite of Victoria. Ans.: Nanaimo is centrally located; Sooke is more at the end of the road (so it is not the same thing).

E.L.: Have you tried a shared work place for HBB? Ans.: The problem is how to get them (HBB owners) to take it to the next level. They were surprised to find that most HBB don't want to leave home. They did set up an incubator with tech stuff to be shared but not much take-up on it. They do have private sector shared spaces. They have lots of

available office spaces in Nanaimo.

C.B.: Is there a food share? What is your (Economic Development group) connection?

Ans.: There is a food share society in town but his office doesn't have any connection to food. Most of the farmlands are in the Regional District, which is a separate entity and they have their own Economic Development that is not really connecting to the Nanaimo City; "not a ton of coordination".

Reports:

6.1 - Provide feedback on possible indicators for measuring progress on the CEDC Strategy.

N.McI.: There is a CED data and measuring system developed by the B.C. government. We need to focus on outputs.

D.E.: Question re: some of the indicators that could be included but are not: 1. percent of businesses that have business licenses and 2. number of business closures.

D.W.: Best to focus on and support local businesses

D.L.: Businesses have shut down due to increases in rent when a building changes hands; this is a challenge.

D.W.: Let's not take the responsibility away from business owners to stay current; maybe they haven't raised their prices as needed to be prepared for cost increases.

E.L.: LCR- how do we measure emissions and reduction of climate risk? Maybe invite Maia Carolsfield (DoS Climate Action Coordinator) to connect.

N.McI.: That's a real balance issue. We need to focus on creating jobs here and keeping people off the highway.

6.2 - **Draft RFP (request for proposal) for Employment Lands Strategy.**

(Some background for readers of this report [this is a draft thus some of the dates and other info are not yet filled in]:

*The District of Sooke is seeking a consultant or firm to develop an Employment Lands Strategy intended to assist the District in increasing Low Carbon Resilient commercial/industrial development and creating jobs in Sooke. The Employment Lands Strategy is a high priority and is required in order to create jobs within the District of Sooke, diversify the local economy and take action on climate change. Council has also committed to action on climate change, and has set an ambitious target of reducing GHG emissions in the District by 7% each year until 2030 {approved April...}. One way in which this will be achieved is by reducing the number of commuters using internal combustion engines to travel to work. Encouraging new employers to establish in Sooke, and creating more jobs in the District for residents will help to enhance community well-being, and will help the District achieve its climate action goals. The work will include engagement with Employment Lands-designated land and property owners to understand the readiness and willingness for selling, leasing or renting property that will be used to set up business and create jobs in Sooke. Further, geographical analysis is required of the District's Employment Lands to determine feasible industrial or commercial operations. The District of Sooke Council agreed to the development of an Employment Lands Strategy through the approval of the OCP, Bylaw {XXXX} and the adoption of the District's CED Strategy (insert date). The goal is to complete this work in early 2022. **Based on a review of responses to this Request for Proposals, the District of Sooke intends to select a Proponent who would then be invited to enter into a contract for provision of the services described in section 4. [To read section 4 as well as the entire RFP, see the "agenda" link at the start of this report and then the RFP link in the agenda]***

N.McI.: Regarding the ELS we need to identify and knock down as many barriers as we can. He suggested that we see section 4.4 in draft RFP and also the OCP.

D.E.: We need to be specific. There is not just business and industry; but also agriculture, public sector, healthcare, home-based businesses. We also need to consider historical

land uses (e.g. was there gas station formerly on a site).

M.P.: Two specific areas are designated for ELS. We need to include agriculture and the public sector but **we are looking at growth in the town centre and waterfront**. We need to update zoning bylaws.

Roundtable: E.L. (CAC): kickoff campaign on Earth Day for 7% campaign. They have a public communications company working on it. In the Fall the CAC will be released based on story-telling/listening “what is our dream scenario?” **The CRD has released the emissions inventory. Sooke’s emission have increased 9% since 2007.** D.W. (Wittich Environmental Services): It is a struggle to keep staff. J.F. (T’sou-ke First Nations): Community Health Centre construction set to start in May (in vicinity of gas station/donut shop). M.M. (Chamber): Hidden Treasures campaign is going well. Business Excellence awards ceremony in Feb. They did a survey of business owners in Sooke: “it is too expensive to operate here”. D.E. (museum): there will be workshops and a new exhibit coming up and the Night Market in the summer C.B. (SRCHN): They will be working with Alysha McLaren-Jones on climate concerns; they have applied for a grant to help guide youth in career choices and are still looking for funding for the Seniors’ Centre. D.L. Sooke is quite different from Nanaimo altho it was good to hear the presentation by Bill Corsan.