

Community Economic Development Committee meeting Nov. 26th, 2021 9-10:30 in Council chambers.

Present: Christine Bossi (chairperson and also chair of SRCHN), Karen Mason (president of Chamber of Commerce), Peter Doukakis (WorkLink B.C. CEO), Beth Lang (Climate Action Committee [CAC] rep), Doug Wittich, Sam Purdy, Ryan Chamberlain, Dana Lajeunesse (DoS Council rep), Sue Welke (DoS CED Officer), Norm McGinnis (DoS CAO), Chandra Frobel (DoS Corporate Services Assistant), and in the public chairs, Jeff Bateman (DoS Councillor), Mike Menard and yours truly, J.P. These meetings are not recorded but the minutes are posted:

<https://sooke.civicweb.net/filepro/document/64724/Committee%20-%20Community%20Economic%20Development%20-%2026%20Nov%202021%20Minutes.pdf?widget=true>

These notes are my own recordings of what happened and as such are subject to my interpretation, focus (and hearing limitations).

The entire meeting was devoted to the final review of the Sooke Economic Development Strategy as can be found at <https://sooke.civicweb.net/document/64058>. Sue Welke, beamed in from Alberta to where she has re-located, led the discussion. She mentioned a few changes suggested by CEDC member Doni Eve who was not present at this meeting. I did not manage to write any of those down but I think they are reflected in the final edition of the Strategy. Emphasis and budgetary requests are focused on contracting an Employment Lands Strategy (\$20,000 – defined as “lands designated in the OCP where employment occurs or will occur; this can include industrial, light industrial, business parks and other commercial activities”) and \$10,000 for promotional materials to attract businesses to Sooke. Comments from the CEDC members were as follow:

Beth Lang: wondering why the mention of new businesses being able to use carbon offsets if they cannot sufficiently lower their green house gas (ghg) emissions was omitted from the final draft. Karen Mason explained that they were moving away from mandating. Beth Lang added that there needs to be more discussion between the CEDC and CAC and that up until now the CAC has been focusing on residential lowering of ghg but need to also include businesses.

Doug Wittich: smaller businesses cannot afford to lower ghg emissions as it would entail buying expensive new equipment.

Norm McGinnis: everything we do will be towards moving entire District towards LCR (low carbon resilience).

Dana Lajeunesse: we need to educate people on what are the benefits to those businesses that can change to LCR. We need to offer training for local businesses. Suggested asking the Chamber (of Commerce) to do a survey of its members to find out what sort of training folks would be interested in.

D. W.: it might be a generational thing; younger generation is more inclined to make decisions that might decrease their profits in favour of benefitting the community.

Christine Bossi: could the District produce info on businesses that have made changes that are lowering their ghg and ecological footprints?

Peter Doukakis: WorkLink provides all sorts of benefits for new hires. C.B. suggested that P.D. might give a talk on all the many programs for new businesses available thru WorkLink and that the talk be posted on several websites.

B.L. noted that there are no details on the partnership with the T'sou-ke Nation that is mentioned in the Strategy. Sue Welke said that is for future determining and N. McG. added that the relationship between the DoS and the T'sou-ke Nation is very good and "timing is on their terms". And P. D. noted that WorkLink has a grant and will be hiring a full-time indigenous outreach specialist.

Roundtable (updates on what has been happening in the organizations represented by CEDC members):

1. B.L.: CAC has proposed a 7% per year reduction in ghg emissions in Sooke in order to meet their 50% reduction by 2030. Two keys to achieving that next year are to take 250 cars off the road and have 250 houses shift to heat pumps from fossil fuels for heating. They are doing storytelling to enthuse people. They requested \$4000 for a study on developing a tele-work centre. Carbon emissions counting will be done by their newly hired climate intern, Maia Carolfield. She will help people wayfind for rebates and maybe organize group purchases. Have not yet talked about working with businesses.

Sam Purdy: watched the South Island Prosperity Partnership (SIPP) Rising Economy 4-day event held this week on line (if readers are interested in what was presented and by whom here is the link: <https://ourrisingeconomy.com/#:~:text=November%2022%2D25%2C%202021,in%2Dperson%20and%20virtual%20event!>)

C.B.: SRCHN (Sooke Region Communities Health Network) is busy with organizing the affordable housing on Wadams Way. Will be fund-raising for the Seniors' Centre. Have hired 2 new persons thanks to grants. They have office space available.

K.M. Exciting news: Shop Local B.C. has granted a \$35,000 grant to the Chamber (thanks to the DoS for reinstating the Chamber's service agreement which enabled them to hire someone who could apply for that grant). Dec. 7th Business Excellence Awards. At their January AGM K.M. will step down as president and Mike Menard will be taking over. He will be taking her position on the CEDC as well.

D.W. (Wittich Environmental): He has been dealing with residential oil spills for years (he noted that there is no longer insurance for oil leaks). Mostly young people and old people are still using heating oil. Proposed program (by CAC) of buying heat pumps in bulk is a great idea. Need more than 250 pump conversions, tho.

P.D.: WorkLink exceeded their revenue targets by 300% this year. Will be investing it in the community. They lost their contractor for building their new building on Church Rd. but hoping to find a local contractor. They have invested \$500,000 in Port Renfrew promoting Pacheedaht businesses. Hope to bring in more staff to apply for grants in the Fall.

D.L.: Also participated in the SIPP Rising Economy sessions, along with mayor Maja Tait. Main thrust was about climate change and innovation. Especially supporting UVic, Camosun and Royal Roads which are championing innovation. T'sou-ke chief Gordon Planes gave a presentation at one of the sessions and "blew everyone away".

Ryan Chamberlain: He is the T'sou-ke Nation marine rep. He noted that there is a 2-year window where initiatives are supported by grants so need to develop independent support, especially for youth. The Coastal Restoration Society has been trapping green crabs, an invasive species that eat all the eel grass. Very tiny. Chitosan is a by-product of them which can be used for various things such as straws. The CRS is also working on removing derelict boats. Investors are looking at the Sooke waterfront and finding it "very exciting". He is hoping to encourage the CRD to look at the watershed as a whole (not just the oceans), including things like the Muir Creek eco-system and logging practices.

K.M.: the environmental part of it all is affecting all of us. Looking at greening vehicles, removing diesel particulate makes it expensive to run those vehicles. "People are followers. They need leaders to teach them how to do it for themselves".

N.Mc.: will be leaving the CEDC as staff advisor; CEDC to move to Planning and Development and will be out of Norm's jurisdiction. Focus will be on long term planning now and a new staff person will be the manager of Planning and Development.

Jeff Bateman: Sees a need for a commercial kitchen in Sooke. We need to get it into one of the developments coming into Sooke. Also sees a shortage of "energy advisors".

Everyone thanked Sue Welke CED Officer for her hard work on developing the Strategy. It will be presented to Council on Dec. 13th.

Chandra Frobels asked everyone if they want to continue on the CEDC next year to let her know. Next meeting will be in January.