

Community Economic Development Committee meeting March 25, 2022 9-11 a.m. in Council Chambers

In attendance: Christine Bossi, chairperson, Doni Eve, Mike Menard, Sam Purdy, Jeff Frank, Dana LaJeunesse (DoS Council rep), Chandra Frobel (DoS Corporate Services), Maia Carolsfield (DoS Climate Action Coordinator), Norm McInnis (DoS CAO), Matthew Pawlow (Director of Planning and Development DoS), yours truly, Jo Phillips (T.S. observer; taking notes). Any errors and apparent misinterpretations are unintentional and my own.

1. Report by Mary Dunn from SRCHN (Sooke Region Community Health Network) updating on plans for a Seniors Complex including 79 units of low-income housing as well as a Seniors' and Youth Centre. This is to be located on "lot A" which is east of the new library bordered by Wadams Way and Anna Marie Rd. SRCHN has an agreement with the DoS to lease the north half of lot A for a nominal fee per year for many years. But to achieve affordable rents the project needs to be approved/accepted by B.C. Housing and it was not on their last approved list. The MOU with the DoS will remain in place for the "next call". Meanwhile SRCHN has secured much support, financial and otherwise from many groups in Sooke for when the project goes ahead. They hope to have rents below market also for non-profits (example given was Sooke Arts Council) in the building and could maybe have a venue for holding weddings as a bit of an income generator. Seniors needing housing are encouraged to get on the BC Housing registry now so BC Housing will know there is a need in Sooke.

2. Report by Matthew Pawlow on where things are progressing on Lot A. That would be the south portion of Lot A (next to the SRCHN lease). It is all on the DoS website. He is working with Skyline, the owners of the Evergreen Mall, who want to extend their mall onto that property. When he finished his report he asked if there were any questions. There were none from the CED Committee members at that time so J.P., observer/notetaker, raised her hand and was acknowledged by the chairperson:

J.P.: where is Skyline based? M.P.: Guelph, Ontario; J.P.: often developers who are not from the area do not really have the best interests of the community in mind. Skyline has a notable history in that mall of inviting franchises in at the expense of local businesses. This is a concern.

D.E.: who would end up owning that land? The District got a bargain on that land. Is Skyline hoping to buy it from the DoS or lease it? M.P.: there would need to be a public disposition to approve what is done with that land.

J.F.: in order to develop something you need international developers. Developers in Sooke don't have money for big developments. (unspoken thought by J.P., observer/notetaker: wouldn't that area be a lovely place for a park with picnic tables and walking paths and maybe some places for kids to play or spaces for outdoor yoga classes?).

M.P.: We need to tighten things up for development per the OCP

3. General comments:

C.B.: where exactly is the town core? North or south of route 14? Where is the vision?

J.F.: What is happening with the Employment Lands Strategy? How are we creating opportunities to bring in people from abroad to create employment?

N.Mc.: Employment Lands Strategy is in a holding pattern due to the OCP not yet being passed. Some questions for the CEDC: how do we support the SRCHN plans and maybe take some risks there? How do we design our town centre?

D.L.: while at Camosun for 30 years around the mechanical engineering department he had been trying to convince manufacturers to come to Sooke and they always said Sooke is lovely but it has no amenities. "All the things we have been talking about today are amenities."

C.B.: The new Work Link building being built would also benefit businesses moving here (by providing opportunities for hiring and training local people).

N.Mc.: If any of the groups in Sooke are planning on major fundraising we all need to know so we can work together (instead of all trying for the same grants).

D.E.: It makes more sense to renovate existing buildings than to build new ones.

M.P.: We are looking into creating some co-working spaces. Maia (Carolsfield) toured some in Victoria. Very cool. Will talk with Peter Dukakis from Work Link (about creating some at the new WorkLink building).

Roundtable (wherein members of the CEDC update on what is going on in their sphere):

J.F. Construction is starting on the T'sou-ke Nation's new health centre and 200 person community hall on the highway next to their gas station/Tim Hortons. Maybe he can make a presentation on it at the next CEDC meeting?

D.E.: museum outdoor area has been used by a lot of groups over the Covid times. Night market will be starting June 2.

M.M.: Chamber did a business survey of Sooke; it is posted on their website and it is very interesting and informative...he recommends we check it out; will be resuming in person mixers; looking at concept of a community kitchen (have a potential space and grant applications are being looked at).

C.B. pointed out that SRCHN has compiled a list of community kitchens in Sooke and there are actually lots...maybe 15.

I had to leave the meeting a bit early so I did not hear the rest of the roundtable or any closing remarks.