

Special Council Meeting, July 19, 2022  
Reported by Jack Gegenberg

All Councilors present, but the Mayor was absent. All present at Council Chambers, except Lajeunesse, who attended via Zoom. Beddows chaired.

Summary: The meeting was 3 hours 40 minutes. Council 'dissolved' into the Committee of the Whole, under which the procedure of speaking, moving, etc., was considerably less formal. The meeting consisted entirely of finishing a review of the OCP draft. This arose from a motion passed at June 27 Council Meeting (from Bateman) that Council conduct one more meeting at which DPA's and other high points as identified by Council are discussed, and then the next steps are determined at a future Special Meeting.

Initially, three options were presented for what these next steps were to be:

1. Review the draft, make no recommendations, and hand it over to the next (that is, post-election) Council.
2. Provide feedback on the draft and give Second Reading. No amendments would be made to the draft.
3. The Committee of the Whole recommend that Council direct staff to prepare amendments to the OCP to reflect Council feedback and that Council direct Staff to bring forward all public comment, referral comments and the bylaw for consideration of second reading as amended at a Special Council Meeting of early September.

Option 3 was moved by Beddows, seconded by Bateman and approved 4-2, with Lajeunesse and McMath opposed.

There ensued a long, rambling discussion of various aspects of the draft OCP. About half of this was devoted to DPAs (Development Permit Areas). This breaks Sooke into 10 areas according to their utility and geography:

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There is long history of disputation over this. The idea is that development permits must be tailored to character of the development and the environment in which the development takes place. Developers favour a more or less generic homogeneous system, with uniform rules, requirements and procedures.

The discussion of the DPAs part of the OCP occurred after shorter discussion of some specific issues raised by councilors. This discussion was largely driven by Bateman, who had a list of items that he felt needed 'tuning' before second reading. For instance Bateman asked Staff (and it was Pawlow who answered here, and most often in the sequel) if checklists concerning sustainability/green usage are

regularly consulted. Staff said they are not. Bateman and Staff spoke several times about the importance of checklists (sometimes referred to in the meeting as 'Step Codes') in streamlining the permit process. Bateman was concerned that many policy items in the OCP draft were not followed up with action statements. An example of this, from Bateman, is that the policy on affordable housing mentioned the value of manufactured homes, but this was not followed up by any statement of action.

In the course of this discussion (that is, prior to taking up the questions of DPAs), McMath objected to the process being followed here of going through the draft microscopically, looking for word changes. She would prefer it if Council simply approved (or disapproved) the overall thrust of the document, leaving it to Staff to make 'minor corrections.' Beddows disagreed, saying that the OCP was by nature a technical document to be used by Staff and Council in their deliberations. About 1 hour was spent on the questions of wording and consistency raised, primarily, by Bateman. Whew. Then on to DPA.

St. Pierre began the question of DPAs by asking the question to Staff: what is 'clarity' in the Permit process? Staff answered that the Permit process is streamlined by having straightforward checklist type forms and procedures. McMath said that the issue really was about how quickly Permit applications can be processed. Again Bateman said checklists speed up and streamline that process.

At this point, the dynamic became that of a dialogue between McMath and Lajeunesse (ML) on the one hand, and Bateman and Beddows (BB) on the other. Basically ML think that the approval process cannot be completed before there is a new Council; BB think that it is possible, and productive, to push the approval process as hard as possible, with approval sometime in September. ML questioned whether Staff had the time and personnel to do the necessary editing and revising. Pawlow said that Staff already recognized and operate towards producing a final document for this Council. Council proceeded to examine the DPA part of the draft, leading to mostly unanimous, consensual approval for wording changes. St. Pierre came up with a somewhat dubious analogy between the DPA part of the OCP and marriage: the old OCP is like the marriage vows, inspirational, but not very useful as guide for working out the relationship; the new OCP is like the pre-nup, laying out the procedures for living as a couple....

There was an interesting moment in the discussion of the relationship of the OCP to Transportation Strategic Planning, when McMath asked if these documents provide support for a 'northern' (that is, not via Sooke Rd) road access to Sooke. Lajeunesse muttered something about a route from Shawnigan Lake to Sooke. Hint of things to come?

A couple of times, in items in the draft that called for collaboration with the T'sou-ke nation on things like energy conservation planning. St. Pierre thought that the language 'requiring' such collaboration was too strong, and suggested replacing 'require' with 'encourage' or 'promote'. Council okayed this.

In the end, whew again, the vote was 4-2 in favour of having Staff prepare an amended draft for second reading at a Special Council meeting in early September.