

**MINUTES
PLANNING, TRANSPORTATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY
COMMITTEE**

Held at Saanich Municipal Hall, Committee Room #2
June 11, 2015 at 4:30 p.m.

Present: Chair: Councillor Haynes

Members: Bill Mumford, Blair Echlin, Suzanne Bartel, June Klassen, John Schmuck, Andrea Mercer, Travis Lee

Staff: Cameron Scott, Manager of Community Planning; Elizabeth van den Hengel, Committee Clerk

Guests: Jullian McCue, Backyard Miniature Goat Advocate; Richard McCue, Backyard Miniature Goat Advocate; Casey Edge, Executive Director, Victoria Residential Builders Association; John Sercombe, Limona Construction and Tim Schauerte, President, Victoria Residential Home Builders Association

Absent: Jeremy Krogh

MINUTES

MOVED by S. Bartel and seconded by B. Mumford, "That the minutes of the Planning, Transportation and Economic Development Advisory Committee meeting held May 14, 2015 be adopted as circulated."

CARRIED

BACKYARD ANIMALS

The Chair introduced Ms. Jillian McCue. Ms. McCue provided the Committee with an overview of backyard miniature goats and the following was noted:

- Backyard miniature goats are an environmentally friendly way to mow lawns and control many types of invasive plants.
- The Town of Esquimalt recently "hired" some goats for maintenance.
- Miniature goats produce fertilizer that can be used within the Municipality.
- Miniature goats can produce up to half a quart of milk per day.
- Miniature goats are quiet if given attention and enjoy being kept in pairs.
- Seattle allows for backyard miniature goats but the males must be neutered and de-horned.
- Seattle has had a Goat Bylaw since 2007. In the eight years Seattle has permitted backyard miniature goats there are fifty licenced miniature goats in the Seattle urban area.
- The Seattle Animal Shelter reports that they do not receive complaints with respect to backyard miniature goats.
- Denver, San Francisco and Portland also have bylaws that allow for backyard miniature goats.
- The City of Burnaby is currently considering allowing backyard miniature goats.
- Allowing backyard miniature goats is a good fit with Saanich's Strategic Plan model of a sustainably community.

The Committee asked questions of Ms. McCue and the following was noted:

- Restrictions on the number of miniature goats
- Seattle has a licence fee for goats modelled after dog licencing.
- Lot size restrictions would need to be determined.
- Restrictions on the number of miniature goats per lot would need to be determined.
- Miniature goat life expectancy is 8-16 years.
- Miniature goats do not require a high fence to keep them contained.

The Committee asked about costs associated with the development of a Backyard Miniature Goat Bylaw. The Manager of Community Planning estimated that the cost for the development of a Backyard Miniature Goat Bylaw could be in the range of \$10,000 - \$20,000. This figure is based up on the costs incurred when developing the Backyard Chickens Bylaw for Saanich. The cost range is dependent on if the research and public engagement process are completed with Saanich Staff or if outside consultants are hired to perform the work.

The Committee thanked Ms. McCue for her presentation.

MOTION: Moved by J. Klassen and seconded by J. Schmuck: “That the Planning, Transportation and Economic Development Advisory Committee recommends that Council request staff to prepare an approach to amend the Backyard Chickens Bylaw to allow miniature goats and report on costs associated with amending the Backyard Chickens Bylaw.”

CARRIED

VICTORIA RESIDENTIAL BUILDERS ASSOCIATION

The Chair introduced Mr. Casey Edge, Executive Director, Victoria Residential Builders Association; Mr. John Sercombe, Limona Construction and Mr. Tim Schauerte, President, Victoria Residential Home Builders Association. Mr. Edge gave an overview of affordability challenges from the home builders perspective The following was noted:

- Affordability is incompatible with using new housing as a source of government revenue.
- There are three levels of government that charge GST, Property Transfer Tax, density bonus fees, permit fees and public amenities. In addition to the fees and taxes there are challenging land use policies and annual Building Code changes.
- The fees and taxes amount to approximately 20% of the cost of a new home.
- Inflation has eroded the GST new housing rebate to less than 10%.
- Removing multiple Property Transfer Tax charges during the development phases of a home would reduce the cost of a new home. Currently there are three Property Transfer charges in the final price of the new home.
- Property Transfer Tax is paid twice on the foundation of a new home.
- GST and Property Transfer tax are not indexed for inflation. The GST and Property Transfer Tax were \$11,000 and \$3,000 respectively in 2000. In 2013, taxes were \$30,000 and \$10,000.

- Municipal governments play a significant role in rising home ownership costs by:
 - Demands for cash contributions and amenities
 - Unaffordable land use policies
 - Uncertain and inefficient development processes
 - Layering of regulations
 - Differing interpretations of the Building Code
- Building permits in Langford take several days, while permits in Saanich take multiple weeks.
- Some Canadian municipalities allow professional builders to have permits fast-tracked.
- Projects must be affordable for average incomes in the region. If the numbers do not work, projects do not proceed, resulting in lost community revitalization, property tax revenue and fewer local jobs for young skilled trades.
- New development offers the opportunity to expand the property tax base.
- Benefits and amenities enjoyed by the public should be paid for by the public, not via mortgages of new home buyers. The best way to pay for the public benefits and amenities is by using property tax revenue.
- Planning and governance models are out of step in a world of climate change and rising costs, including inefficient infrastructure and transportation systems.
- The Local Government Act requires municipalities to include affordable housing in their Official Community Plans, but there is little oversight/enforcement by the province.
- The language in some Official Community Plans promotes affordability but is unsupported by policy.
- Renovation Tax Credits promote affordable energy efficiency in older homes, health and safety for homeowners and skilled jobs in every community across Canada, while helping to discourage the underground economy.
- Over regulation is a common source of rising costs.
 - Rainscreen regulations implemented as a result of condominium failures, despite no presented evidence of failures in exterior envelopes constructed and designed properly for single family homes.
 - Original cost estimates were \$650 for an average home, actual cost was in excess of \$5000.
- Home buyers should be offered a choice between well built, energy efficient, affordable homes versus over-engineered, excessively regulated homes that are unaffordable.

Committee discussion occurred and the following was noted:

- Municipalities should consider partnerships with the development community.
- Development process in Saanich is too difficult and uncertain.
- GAP analysis should be done on homes within the CRD affordable for incomes in the \$30,000-\$40,000 range.
- Different property mill tax rates when homes are certified as a “greener” home could help with affordability.
- Commercial development and permitting in Saanich should be reviewed and these processes improved also.
- A differed property tax model for senior home ownership to allow seniors to remain in their homes should be considered.
- Density re-zoning needs to be pursued.

The Committee thanked the speakers for their presentation.

REPORTS ON EXTERNAL ISSUES IMPACTING AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN SAANICH

The Chair gave a brief overview of the four distributed reports: Affordable Homes and Property Transfer Tax; Review of “Down-loaded” Building Codes; Home Renovation Tax Credits and Affordable Independent Housing for Seniors. The following was noted:

Affordable Homes and Property Transfer Tax;

- The Vancouver Island Construction Association, Victoria Residential Builders Association and others report that government fees can account for 20% of the costs of a new home.
- Affordable homeownership in BC remains challenging for many young families, people of varying ages, incomes and physical needs.
- The revenue generated by the Property Transfer Tax (PTT) has negative impacts on housing affordability in our province and deserves review.

Review of “Down-loaded” Building Codes;

- Homebuyers should be given the choice between well-built, safe, energy efficient and affordable homes versus over engineered, excessively regulated homes that are unaffordable for families.
- For example, homes under a certain square footage could be classified as “affordable.” Being in this classification would experience less tax and exemption from certain code regulations unnecessary for a home of this size.
- The home renovation tax credit is a worthwhile revenue stream.

Home Renovation Tax Credits;

- Tax credits discourage illegal renovations by requiring receipts and generating more tax revenue for the government.
- Homeowners can claim up to 20% on renovations valued \$3,000-\$10,000, to be completed by a qualified contractor.
- Tax credits discourage off label renovations.
- Young people in BC and Saanich need jobs. The renovation market can create employment for skilled trades and downstream to retail.
- In summary, federal and provincial renovation tax credits will:
 - Help improve the range of housing types, affordability and housing adaptability.
 - Help create jobs in communities across British Columbia and Canada.
 - Help reduce off-permit renovation and the underground economy.

Affordable Independent Housing for Seniors;

- The recent report by the BC Seniors Advocate has recommended creation of a Homeowner Expense Deferral Account type program.
- This deferral account program would allow seniors with low to moderate income to use the equity in their home to offset the costs of housing by deferring some or all of the major ongoing household and exceptional expenses associated with homeownership until their house is sold.
- The report by the BC Seniors Advocate further recommended that the Residential Tenancy Act and Strata Property Act be amended to protect tenants and owners who require non-structural modification (grab bars, non-slip flooring) from either eviction, fines or denial and protect their rights to access grant money from the Home Adaptions for Independence program.

Committee discussion occurred and the following was noted:

- The question of appropriateness of the wording for the PTT motion was raised. B. Mumford who has worked for the Provincial government stated that he had received many such recommendations from UBCM over the years and that the motion on PTT is presented in the correct format for the Province.
- There is a vast amount of information to consider within these four reports and further Committee discussion would be welcome.
- The amount of government taxation and fees associated with home building seems excessive.
- Over engineering and overbuilding homes does not appear to be an environmentally sustainable practice and results in affordability issues for many potential home owners.

The Committee thanked the Chair for his work in putting together these reports.

MOTION: **Moved by B. Mumford and seconded by T. Lee: “That the Planning, Transportation and Economic Development Advisory Committee endorse the following four reports, dated June 3, 2015 by Councillor Haynes on external issues impacting affordable housing in Saanich:**

- **Affordable Homes and Property Transfer Tax,**
- **Affordable Independent Housing for Seniors,**
- **Home Renovation Tax Credit,**
- **Review of the “Down-loaded” Building Codes.”**

CARRIED

LOCAL AREA PLAN UPDATES

The Manager of Community Planning gave an overview of the Local Area Plan update process and timeline. The following was noted:

- Planning has begun a multi-year project to update the 12 Local Area Plans (LAP).
- Three workshops with community associations were held to explore options to LAP updates.
- Options to address community planning issues were explored during the workshops. The default position was to proceed to Council with a process to chronologically update the LAPs using the standard 24 month process.
- There are three streams of community planning work:
 - Local Area Plans
 - Centre/Corridor Plans
 - Policy Initiatives
- Local Area Plans provide a vision and plan for a neighbourhood.
- The LAPs were last updated between 1997 and 2007.
- Key issues raised with the LAP update process are:
 - Speed of Plan development and implementation.
 - Focusing resources on areas where change is occurring.
 - Improved connection to the other Saanich and Regional Plans.
- Clear direction to move away from conventional LAP updates, and balance resources between LAP updates and other Community Planning work.

- Community Planning Work Plan encompasses the following:
 - Updating all 12 LAPs.
 - Develop plans for the five “Centre/Corridor Plans”.
 - Undertake policy initiatives.
- Centre and Corridor Plans:
 - Will consist of a detailed plan for a specific geographic area.
 - Responds to the focus of the OCP.
 - Areas with the majority of growth and change will be focussed.
 - Issues with boundary scale will be address.
- Policy Initiatives:
 - Address a key issue.
 - Often District-wide /areas share common characteristics.
 - Can address an issue in a small geographic area.
- Tillicum/Gorge – Action Plan adopted in 2005 and has been completed.
- Shelbourne Valley and Uptown/.Douglas Corridor- planning is underway.
- Quadra Corridor-to be initiated.
- Criteria for the prioritization of LAP updates:
 - Recent development activity.
 - Projected dwelling unit increase.
 - Age of the existing plan.
 - Presence of a Village.
- Priorities for policy initiatives are to be determined through Council strategic planning process.
- Several initiatives have been previously identified and require prioritization.
- LAP updates will have a focussed scope to ensure the public process can be completed within 12 months (18 month total process).The scope of each LAP update will be based on the area characteristics and early consultation results.
- A Project Advisory Committee could be formed to assist with the updating of the LAPs.
- The proposed role of the Project Advisory Committee would be to:
 - Advice on public engagement techniques to ensure outreach is effectively undertaken within the community.
 - Promote the project and public engagement opportunities within the community.
 - Provide feedback to staff on plan concepts and objectives.
- The Project Advisory Committee would seek representation from:
 - Established neighbourhood associations.
 - Residents from different geographic areas within the local area.
 - The local business community (where applicable).
 - Key stakeholder groups.
 - People with a range of interests and backgrounds.
- Next steps include the Planning Department reporting to Council on the Community Planning Work Plan and the Local Area Planning Program Terms of Reference.
- Following Council direction the first LAP update will begin.

Committee discussion occurred and the following was noted:

- Updating all Local Area demographics immediately to develop community profiles could be considered.
- A stand-alone appendix of updated demographics could be included in the Local Area Plans.

The Committee thanked the Manager of Community Planning and praised the excellent job that the Planning Department has done with developing the LAP update work-plan.

MOTION: Moved by J. Schmuck and Seconded by S. Bartel: “That the Planning, Transportation and Economic Development Advisory Committee recommends that Council consider allocating adequate manpower and resources to the Planning Department for updating the Local Area Plans.”

CARRIED

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 6:45 pm

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for September 10, 2015.

Chair

I hereby certify these minutes are accurate.

Committee Secretary