

MINUTES
NATURAL AREAS, PARKS & TRAILS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Committee Rm. 2 and via Microsoft Teams
Saanich Municipal Hall, 770 Vernon Avenue
November 9, 2023, at 4:11 p.m.

Present: Councillor Judy Brownoff, Pamela Carroll, Catherine Du Bois (via Teams), Christine Harbord, David Little (via Teams), Darrell Wick.

Staff: Troy McKay, Senior Manager of Transportation & Development Services; Paul de Greef, Manager of Parks Planning and Development; Alix Link, Manager of Urban Forestry, Natural Areas, and Community Stewardship; Rebecca Newlove, Manager of Sustainability (via Teams); Megan Squires, Senior Transportation Planner; Angela Hawkshaw, Committee Clerk.

Guests: Joan Hendrick and Carmel Thomson

Regrets: Dave Marecek, Evan Papps and Don Sutton

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOVED by P. Carroll and Seconded by D. Wick: “That the Minutes of the Natural Areas Parks and Trails Advisory Committee meeting dated October 12, 2023 be adopted as circulated.

CARRIED

CHAIR’S REMARKS

The Chair welcomed the committee, and the following was noted:

- The Capitol Regional District (CRD) has purchased the former Royal Oak Golf Course parcel of land. A park values inventory will be undertaken. Through ecological restoration, the landscape could support a large diversity of species.
- A motion was passed by the CRD that any maintenance or improvements required at Elk and Beaver Lake Parks will be handled through property taxation and grants. Free parking will remain.

PROSPECT LAKE HYDRO GROUP

The guest speaker made the following presentation, and the following was noted:

- All options have been exhausted through the Municipal and local Constituency Office. The co-operation and assistance from Saanich staff are appreciated.
- Ongoing communication and persuasion from Saanich citizens and staff have been unsuccessful.
- The planned tree loss has grown from 362 to 485 trees. An estimated 98% are believed to be native species and mature protected trees.
- A BC Hydro representative stated the project could proceed at any time within the next 3

years.

- This project is environmentally destructive and is designed to service only 100 properties along 4.8 km.
- A focus on replacement trees is unobtainable.
- This project may only be adjusted via a political solution. The ministers responsible for BC Hydro, resource management and climate mitigation actions demand to mediate a solution; to place this project on hold in order to allow for a thorough review of its planned route and its effects.
- A strategy has been sent to Lana Popham, Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport; Josie Osborne, Minister of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation; and Nathan Cullen, Minister of Land, Water and Resource Stewardship. These Ministers may direct BC Hydro to investigate alternate routes and have transparency in communication.
- The recommendation contained in the report (on file) from Councillor Brownoff is supported by the Prospect Lake Road Trees Advocacy Group.
- A future initiative to work with Ministries and communities to curb BC Hydro's excessive power is key.
- The *Hydro and Power Authority Act [RSBC 1996] Chapter 212* needs updating.

ACCESSIBILITY AND UNIVERSAL DESIGN IN PARKS

The Manager of Parks, Planning and Development gave the following presentation (PowerPoint on file), and the following was noted:

- Accessibility guidelines and strategies are used within parks.
- Universal design and signage that is easy to read is a general rule.
- 8 accessible washrooms have been upgraded.
- Useable and accessible trail systems have been enhanced on Mt. Tolmie.
- Playgrounds are replaced and repaired regularly. Equipment is constantly upgraded.
- Wood chips qualify as an accessible surface material.
- Playground equipment have transfer stations for physical or visually handicapped children.
- The beach mat at Gyro Park is the only one in Saanich. It is challenging to keep clear from debris but is well used.
- The benches at Lambrick Park are designed to be accessible. The tables have extended ends and concrete pads for wheelchairs.
- The Enabling Accessibility Fund has provided some funding for various projects in Saanich's parks.
- Topography is a challenge in many of the parks.
- The leash optional parks have wider trails and grades that will allow for all users.
- Enclosed leash optional areas could be developed with wider gates to enter, material to accommodate walking aids and wheelchairs, seating, and clear signage.
- The People, Pets, Parks strategy is not a design concept. The considerations are part of the design process. Saanich is currently in the strategy stage.
- PKOLS parking lot is having several upgrades done to the walkways and curb letdowns.
- A future presentation to the committee about Park design is welcome.
- Information gathered from the *Pop-up Dog Parks* pilot project has offered insight for future facilities and the amenities they could provide. The learning outcomes included the durability of the fencing and the maintenance requirements for the turf. This program was

in place for 5 months. A phased approach is expected, and new locations could be explored.

The committee made the following comments:

- Francis King Park’s boardwalk is accessible and could be a design for future projects.
- Saratoga Beach has a mat strategically placed to allow access for all abilities while protecting the entry area from varying weather conditions.
- Saanich does not offer advice to other accessibility plans or reviews.

The Parks Planning and Development Manager exited the meeting at 4:36 p.m.

BC HYDRO PROJECT – REPORT

The Chair introduced the report, and the following was noted:

- In early 2023, BC Hydro approached the District of Saanich with a proposed project to upgrade high voltage power lines along Prospect Lake Road from Meadowbrook to Munn Road.
- The community has indicated to Saanich that residents have not seen the project plans, timelines, or proposed routing.
- No compensation for trees lost is being considered by BC Hydro despite requests from staff and political representatives.
- A rooting technology was presented as an alternative. This idea was not accepted.
- 3 different timelines have been communicated.
- The Mayor has requested a letter be sent from the Natural Areas, Parks, and Trails (NAPT) committee. This will allow for his signature and a record on file.
- Prospect Lake Rd. will not be widened by Saanich. Site lines and safety are the main concern.
- An increase in hydro consumption due to electric vehicles, secondary suites and larger homes is an explanation for the project.
- The staff have not received an Environmental Impact Assessment.
- An open house with BC Hydro has been requested by the community.
- The housing targets take into consideration rural and environmental impacts.

The recommendation in the October 24, 2023, report by Councillor Brownoff was considered. The committee requested amendments which are noted in the motion below.

MOVED BY D. Marecek and Seconded by C. Du Bois: “That the Natural Areas, Parks, and Trails Advisory Committee recommend that Council send a letter to BC Hydro regarding a hydro line upgrade along Prospect Lake Road requesting the following:

- a clear rationale and supporting evidence for the project;
- a project plan with timelines;
- compensation to Saanich for tree losses;
- a fulsome environmental impact assessment;
- mitigation to Saanich for environmental impacts (based on a fulsome environmental impact assessment) with a focus on ecological restoration;
- collaboration by BC Hydro with the community along Prospect Lake Road; and
- explore development of a Protocol Agreement between BC Hydro and Saanich with respect to BC Hydro projects in Saanich that are likely to have environmental and tree-related impacts. This agreement would include processes for transparent communication, referrals, engagement, and conflict resolution with Saanich and the community as well as decision-making timelines.

CARRIED

DRAFT UPDATED ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN UPDATE

The Senior Transportation Planner gave a presentation (PowerPoint on file), and the following was noted:

- The updated Active Transportation Plan (ATP) document reflects current policies, incorporates up-to-date travel data, reviews, and updates infrastructure priorities for the next 15 years. This will create a framework for future traffic calming policies and address emerging technologies.
- Council adopted the first ATP in 2018 and a commitment was made to update the plan every 5 years.
- The update has been presented to Committees and will be considered by Council in December 2023.
- The feedback that was given in the Spring through online surveys, open houses, and pop-ups events, has been collected and integrated in the update.
- 70% of the public responders support the Vision Statement.
- The Saanich Climate Action Plan lists transportation as one of the key action areas in reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the community.
- The updated goals have been well accepted and supported.
- Expanding and enhancing the trail network has been updated with definitions and actions.
- Timeframe, method, responsibility, and goals guide the implementation of strategies and actions.
- The criteria for prioritization were clarified to include trails.
- Stakeholders have requested a more thorough and complete list of projects and timelines.
- Prioritization is based on feedback received from the surveys and staff input.
- Sidewalk, Cycling and Trail network maps are new to the plan.

The committee made the following comments:

- The new 40 km speed limit may be difficult to enforce.
- Local destinations could offer safe parking and storage for bikes.

- The new protected bike lanes are narrow and difficult to pass other riders. Gaps have been added for this purpose. Future plans are for wider lanes.
- Bicycle parking for new developments could have more guidance. The existing developments do not have a mechanism to adjust parking issues. In the ATP there is a program to assist in upgrading the bike storage.
- The terminology used for the different timelines may be confusing.
- There is no policy in the document to allow businesses to park on residential roads.
- It is appreciated that maps show future plans for residents.
- The trails are shown as a base layer on all the mapping.
- A way to categorize the trails would be helpful.
- Grants could allow for faster timelines.
- Future developments will have guidelines for bike parking.
- Tillicum Rd. could use more area for the safe passage of emergency vehicles.

MOVED by D. Little and Seconded by C. Du Bois: “That the Natural Areas, Parks and Trails Advisory Committee supports the Final Draft Active Transportation Plan with minor updates to the mapping, which are currently underway.”

CARRIED

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 6:39 p.m.

Councillor Brownoff, Chair

I hereby certify these minutes are accurate.

Angela Hawkshaw, Committee Clerk