

**MINUTES OF THE
FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE STANDING COMMITTEE
COMMITTEE ROOM #2
SAANICH MUNICIPAL HALL, 770 VERNON AVENUE
MONDAY, JANUARY 20, 2020 AT 10:00 AM**

Present: Chair: Councillor Susan Brice
Members: Mayor Haynes, Councillors Harper and Mersereau
Staff Members: Paul Thorkelsson, Chief Administrative Officer; Laura Ciarniello, Director of Corporate Services; Valla Tinney, Director of Finance; Jennifer Downie, Administrative Assistant.
Guests: Sharon Hvozdzanski, Director of Planning; Paul Arslan, Senior Manager, Financial Services;
Public: One member of the Public

MINUTES FOR ADOPTION

- October 21, 2019
- November 4, 2019
- December 4, 2019

MOVED by Mayor Haynes and seconded by Councillor Mersereau: “That the minutes of the Finance and Governance Standing Committee meeting of October 21, 2019, and December 4, 2019 be adopted as circulated.”

CARRIED

MOVED by Mayor Haynes and seconded by Councillor Mersereau: “That the minutes of the Finance and Governance Standing Committee meeting of November 4, 2019 be adopted with the following amendment: changing “Grant applicants” to “Grant recipients to appear before Council...”

CARRIED

PERMISSIVE TAX EXEMPTION POLICY REVIEW

The Director of Finance presented the Permissive Tax Exemptions Policy Review report dated January 10, 2020 and responded to questions from committee members.

The Director of Finance noted that the purpose of the report is to provide information relating to the District of Saanich’s Property Tax Exemption Policy and its administration as directed in the motion adopted by Council dated May 13, 2019.

In response to committee members, the Director of Finance noted that Section 220 of the Community Charter establishes the types of property that are exempt from taxation. Land and/or improvements that are captured in this section have their assessments designated as statutorily exempt by BC Assessment on the annual assessment roll. Properties that have a general statutory exemption are not provided to Council for review because the exemption is automatically applied and Council does not have any authority with respect to these exemptions.

Section 220(h) of the Community Charter provides a general statutory exemption for churches. Since the building (improvements) and the land under the building are statutorily exempt, it is only the land surrounding the building that Council may grant a permissive exemption on. Under the Community Charter, Council may, by bylaw, exempt from taxation any area of land surrounding a building set apart for public worship. Once granted, the exemption is perpetual (eg. has no expiry) until the property changes ownership or it is no longer used for its original purpose (this is the current practice and the current bylaw).

The Director of Finance advised that under the current Property Tax Exemption Policy and Procedures, property tax exemptions are reviewed on a four year cycle which provides financial stability for the exemption recipients and the District. New property tax exemption applicants are required to complete a one page application form and provide copies of various documents that confirm their eligibility under the legislative framework.

A review of the policy would ensure that the intent of the legislation continues to be met and would demonstrate a responsible approach that takes into consideration current societal issues and concerns.

In response to Councillor Brice, the Director of Finance and the Chief Administrative Officer noted that with Council's continued interest in affordable housing that it would be prudent to bring forward a report highlighting any potential financial impacts on exempting current and potential future affordable housing projects. The Director of Finance will bring a report back to the Finance and Governance Committee for review after Q4 2020.

MOVED by Mayor Haynes and seconded by Councillor Mersereau: "That the Finance and Governance Standing Committee recommend:

- 1. That the Property Tax Exemption Policy statement for inclusion in Financial Plan Bylaws be amended to express Council's guiding principles, as follows:**

The District of Saanich will continue to support local organizations through permissive tax exemptions. The objective is to consider exemptions individually on their merits, in context with the Saanich Strategic Plan, consistent with other Saanich policies and the principles of accountability, reasonableness, equality / fairness, inclusiveness, and accessibility.

- 2. That staff be directed to develop for Committee review a Council Policy for Permissive Tax Exemption that provides clarity for applicants and Council, and review the current administrative procedures relating to property tax exemption applications with the purpose of implementing the amended policy statement and increasing the availability of information on permissive exemptions while minimizing the need for additional staff resources; and**
- 3. That staff be directed to provide a report to the Finance and Governance Committee on the financial impact of exempting current affordable housing properties and potential future affordable housing projects."**

CARRIED

COUNCIL CODE OF CONDUCT POLICY UPDATE

The Director of Corporate Services presented the Council Code of Conduct Policy Update dated January 9, 2020. The Code of Conduct Policy was adopted by Council in November 2016; since that time gaps and deficiencies have been identified by Council and staff and this updated policy is an attempt to address those issues.

Committee members provided input and amendments on the proposed changes.

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11:23 am – Moved by Mayor Haynes and seconded by Councillor Harper to extend the meeting past 11:30 am.

CARRIED

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Moved by Mayor Haynes and seconded by Councillor Mersereau: “That the Finance and Governance Standing Committee recommends that the Code of Conduct Policy with proposed changes be reviewed by the Chair and then forwarded to Council for approval.”

CARRIED

Moved by Mayor Haynes and seconded by Councillor Mersereau: “That the Finance and Governance Standing Committee direct staff to look at drafting a bylaw that would support the processes that may come out of the Code of Conduct Policy”

CARRIED

TENANT ASSISTANCE POLICY

The Committee reviewed the Notice of Motion put forward by Councillor Brownoff and the subsequent motion from the December 9, 2019 Council meeting.


MOVED by Mayor Haynes and seconded by Councillor Mersereau: “That the Finance and Governance Standing Committee recommends that when this item goes to the Strategic Plan check-in session in April that it be accompanied by the current provincial legislation and policies from Victoria, Vancouver and Burnaby and Landlord BC.”

CARRIED

The Director of Planning will assist with compiling the documents noted in the motion.

ADJOURNMENT

On the motion from Councillor Brice the meeting adjourned at 12:05 pm.



Chair

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.



Committee Secretary

