

**MINUTES**  
**MAYOR'S STANDING COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AFFORDABILITY AND SUPPLY**

Saanich Municipal Hall, Council Chambers

Via Microsoft Teams

May 9, 2022 at 10:02 a.m.

Present: Councillor Zac de Vries (Chair); Mayor Fred Haynes; Councillor Karen Harper; Councillor Rebecca Mersereau.

Staff: Brent Reems, Chief Administrative Officer; Sharon Hvozdzanski, Director of Planning; Cameron Scott, Manager of Community Planning; Pam Hartling, Housing Planning and Policy Manager; and Nancy Chaggar, Senior Committee Clerk.

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**ADOPTION OF MINUTES**

**MOVED by Councillor Harper and Seconded by Councillor Mersereau: "That the minutes of the Mayor's Standing Committee on Housing Affordability and Supply meeting held April 11, 2022 be adopted."**

**CARRIED**

**NEW BUSINESS**

**1. DIGITIZATION UPDATE**

The CAO provided an update on the digitization process for permit applications for the Committee's information and the following was noted:

- Staff are working towards shifting from paper-based to digital permit processes for Planning and Building permits.
- There are two streams to the project: *My City* and *Our City* which are related to Tempest, the software platform for tracking and monitoring permits.
- *My City* is a tool which would allow for applicants to submit Development or Building Permit applications digitally. In return, staff would file application contents digitally.
- The District is piloting three permit areas for *My City* and is currently waiting on Tempest to provide technical support to get this up and running.
- Another barrier for implementing *My City* is the District's hardware (computers, monitors etc.).
- *Our City* allows for anyone to view all applications online through an open portal on the Saanich website, including the status of applications. Staff hope to have this portion of the project live for the beginning of August.
- The system will not include past files. It will start at a point in time relatively close to the launch date in August.

In response to the CAO's update, the following discussions ensued:

- Details about software customization remain unknown because this project is relatively new to Tempest. Tempest is moving towards minimizing customization as much as possible.
- *Our City* will allow tracking on application progress in a transparent manner.
- A verbal update will go forward to Council as soon as possible.

**MOVED by Mayor Haynes and Seconded by Councillor Harper: "That the digitization update provided by the Chief Administrative Officer be received for information."**

**CARRIED**

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The Chair called the Small Apartment Zone and Policy matter as the next discussion item.

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## **2. SMALL APARTMENT ZONE AND POLICY**

The Manager of Community Planning presented a draft proposal for a Small Apartment Zone and Policy and the following was noted:

- This initiative was identified by Council and in the Housing Strategy.
- The purpose of this presentation is to seek input from this Committee prior to Council consideration.
- The proposed Zone would support multi-unit residential buildings on one single family lot with no assembly.
- Other considerations include: part 9 buildings (no elevator); reduced parking requirements and no underground parking; potential for infill for well-serviced areas; building on the Local Area Plan work; and providing input into the Missing Middle Housing program.
- In drafting the new policy, staff have looked at recent projects in the City of Victoria, engaged with developers, conducted site testing and staff analysis, and considered the proposal as part of a broader housing mix.
- The policy objectives include: expanding housing options in areas that are transit-rich and walkable to services; supporting density; and supporting livability through efficient design for smaller units.
- Appropriate areas for development include: orphaned lots; areas along major roads designated for frequent transit; centre corridor areas; areas designated as part of a LAP; and areas adjacent to or across from commercial buildings.
- It will be key to include the proposed policy as a form of Purpose Built rental housing and would look to secure rental for 60 years through a housing agreement.
- The proposed parking ratio is 1:1 with potential for variances where transportation demand management is provided.
- Design policies include: orienting the building towards the street to provide contextual fit with other homes in the area; having at least one tall shade tree in the rear yard; easily accessible bike storage; and parking in the rear.
- Key design guidelines such as operable windows, higher ceilings, storage, and laundry are important to make these micro units livable.
- The recommended new RA-1A Zone provides for a minimum lot size of 650 m<sup>2</sup>, density of 0.8 Floor Space Ratio, and a maximum building height of 10.5 m (3 storeys), among other specifications.
- Should Council endorse this proposal, the new zone would be used when considering development applications. In the long term, this policy would be absorbed into the Missing Middle Housing Program and reflected in the Official Community Plan update.

The following discussions ensued in response to the presentation:

- Consideration for lower parking variances may be given as these types of developments tend to have lower parking demand. In turn, less parking spaces would provide for more open green space for residents to enjoy.
- Consideration may be given for different uses of the front yard setback space on a case by case basis (e.g. use for infrastructure or landscaping).
- It will be important to regulate parking in order to achieve a positive outcome for the neighbourhood.
- There are potentially hundreds of lots that would be suitable for the new RA-1A zone. Potential lots would be subject to detailed site analysis to determine if they are suitable.
- This proposal has the potential to address a shortage in Purpose Built rentals in the District.
- Staff outlined that the policy may be revised to include different parking guidelines for rental versus ownership of these micro-units.
- It will be key to provide two levels of open space on site: immediately outside one's door, and beyond that, elsewhere on the property where there is more open space.
- Nose-in parking may be prevented by implementing landscaping in the front yard. This requirement will be included in the design guidelines and as part of the application process.
- The typical size for these units will range from 300 – 400 ft<sup>2</sup>.
- This form of housing will likely generate variances. The Province is looking at allowing staff to approve minor variances; definitions will need to be provided on what constitutes minor versus major variances.
- The staff report on the Small Apartment Zone will likely come to Council within a couple of months.
- It was expressed that location shouldn't be overly restrictive for this zoning.
- Staff's intention for this policy is to primarily focus on Purpose Built rental housing; however, there may be opportunities for ownership as well.
- It was noted that there's a need for both rental and ownership opportunities and a balance of both should be considered.
- The City of Victoria has placed an emphasis on rental as one of their key elements; however, there's no policy that explicitly states that these developments must be rentals.
- Staff's approach to determine location for these developments is to identify certain locational criteria rather than mapping out specific areas.
- It was expressed that a better understanding is needed on how location will be determined, as well as reasoning around rental versus strata tenure.
- Staff's intention and objective is to expand rental housing; this would be secured through a housing agreement. That being said, it does not have to be done this way.
- Staff are to provide more specifics on locations of eligible new zones in the Report to Council.

**MOVED by Councillor Mersereau and Seconded by Mayor Haynes: "That the proposed Small Apartment Zoning be advanced to Council with more detailed information about the proposed locational distribution of the zone."**

- There isn't enough certainty currently about what the proposal means in practice in terms of location of the proposed zone.
- Members of the community have expressed a need for the opportunity to advance from rental to ownership in order to secure long term housing needs.

- Renters are going to continue to be a significant part of the market given the cost of ownership. Staff advised that it will be important to balance the supply of rental housing over the long term through housing agreements.
- Based on the housing needs assessment work completed, the most pressing need is rentals.
- Staff have received feedback that indicates this type of housing is transitional, and will serve as short term housing as people transition into larger homes.

**MOVED by Councillor Harper and Seconded by Mayor Haynes: “That the motion be amended to add: and the pros and cons of, and options, for enabling strata, rental, or other tenures (like co-housing) within the proposed new zone.”**

- It's important to provide an opportunity for home ownership and the transition into home ownership in the policy.
- The focus would remain on rentals for a specific period of time.
- Although there is an increase in demand for rentals, home ownership has been the cornerstone of building wealth in Canada and offers long term financial security for those who are able to access it.

**The Amendment was then Put and CARRIED**

**The Main Motion, as Amended, was CARRIED**

**Main Motion as Amended:**

**“That the proposed Small Apartment Zoning be moved forward to Council with detailed information about the proposed locational distribution of the Zone and the pros and cons of, and options, for enabling strata, rental, or other tenures (like co-housing) within the proposed new zone.”**

**3. PROCESS CHANGES FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

This item was tabled for a future meeting.

**IN-CAMERA MEETING**

**MOVED by Councillor Mersereau and Seconded by Councillor Harper: “That the meeting be closed in accordance with the *Community Charter*, Part 4, Division 3, Section 90 (2) (b) as the matter relates to the consideration of information received and held in confidence relating to negotiations between the municipality and a provincial government or the federal government or both, or between a provincial government or the federal government or both and a third party.”**

**CARRIED**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**MOVED by Councillor Mersereau and Seconded by Councillor Harper: "That the Mayor's Standing Committee on Housing Affordability and Supply meeting be adjourned at 11:28 a.m."**

**CARRIED  
With Mayor Haynes Absent for the Vote**

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Councillor Zac de Vries, Chair

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

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Committee Secretary