

MINUTES
HOUSING AFFORDABILITY STANDING COMMITTEE
Held at Saanich Municipal Hall, Council Chambers and via MS Teams
770 Vernon Avenue
November 27, 2023 at 10:30am

Present: Councillor Judy Brownoff, Scott Dutchak, Mayor Dean Murdock (Chair), Phil Lancaster, Cam Pringle, Councillor Zac de Vries, Councillor Mena Westhaver

Staff: Lindsay Chase, Director of Planning; Pam Hartling, Housing Planning and Policy Manager; Bob Lapham, Strategic Advisor, Housing Supply; Brent Reems, Chief Administrative Officer; Cameron Scott, Manager of Community Planning

MINUTES

MOVED by Councillor Z de Vries and Seconded by Councillor M. Westhaver: “That the Minutes of the Housing Affordability Standing Committee meeting held August 15, 2022 be adopted as circulated.”

CARRIED

MOVED by Councillor Z de Vries and Seconded by Councillor M. Westhaver: “That the Minutes of the Housing Affordability Standing Committee meeting held June 19, 2023 be adopted as circulated.”

CARRIED

NEIGHBOURHOOD HOMES STUDY UPDATE

The Housing and Policy Manager gave an update on the Neighbourhood Homes Study with the new housing targets order issued to the District by the Minister of Housing. The following was noted:

- Bill 44 was passed by the Minister of Housing to support infill in neighbourhoods and provincial legislation to support regional growth strategy.
- All local governments must allow secondary suites or garden suites inside and outside urban containment boundary (with permits).
- Local governments support 3 or 4 units on every residential lot and 6 infill units adjacent by frequent transit.
- Transit implications specifying transit exchanges and density – additional work to be done for land use and transit. The Province has yet to confirm details of frequent transit corridor.
- The urban containment boundary is not definition for this bylaw change that the province is requiring around garden suite or secondary suite - not considering this to be apart of growth management strategy around urban containment boundary.
- Public Hearing process not permitted for small scale multi-unit housing.
- Limited flexibility for municipalities to differ from provincial legislation.
- Large impact being legislation is the law which must be reflected in zoning bylaw and other regulations to avoid confusion of developers, public, etc. June deadline to update zoning bylaw.
- A lot of details still to come from Province for guidance and regulations. Staff will provide option for Council whenever provided.

The following was noted during discussion and in response to questions from the committee:

- More density will result in a need for more transit to avoid congestion. Behind more frequent transit we will need more buses.
- A discussion of strata compliant four-plexes as opposed to rentals.
- New policies embrace urban parcels more than the past looking at details of higher density which are highly encouraged on major corridors.
- A divide between urban and rural to ensure we are putting density in the right places.

MOVED by Councillor M. Westhaver and Seconded by Councillor Z. de Vries: “That the Housing Affordability Standing Committee recommend that Council request staff to report on details of legislative changes once the regulations are available and understood.”

The Motion was then Put and CARRIED

HOUSING SUPPLY

The Housing Supply report dated November 20, 2023, from the Chief Administrative Officer was reviewed. The following was noted:

- On September 23, 2023, the Minister of Housing issued an order to the District under the Housing Supply Act establishing a housing target for of 4,610 new completed units of housing over a five-year period.
- A significant intent of the Strategic Plan is to use procedures available to increase and improve the supply of diverse and affordable housing that meets the needs of residents now and in the future.
- The targets are ambitious and will challenge the District’s historic output average. The order requires over 900 occupancies per year, which effectively is a tripling in volume.
- The province has been clear to improve process and streamlining and facilitate construction of housing.
- A lot of process work internally with a third party consultant, Berlineaten, creating focus groups to get critical feedback from applicants and staff.
- Working towards rebuilding process making it more efficient with digitalized application process and technology supporting streamlining applications for long term productivity.
- The District is looking for funding from the province with the Housing Accelerator Fund and have written a letter to the Minister for funding support and working with provincial partners to make sure voices are heard.
- Economic development committee has considered report from Finance and how to deal with taxation from new development – staff will use funds and apply to resources. There will be phasing for hiring resources with area of focus being under resourced in Planning Department.

The following was noted during discussion and in response to questions from the committee:

- Using strategy to lessen tax lift on residents.
- One time funds and money for consulting on how to use these funds.

- View OCP amendments are very critical to drive towards targets putting proper balance and focus on economy and social well being.
- Occupancies are considered “completed” along with secondary suites considered as a “unit” or “occupancy”.
- The District is comfortable for meeting first year targets (September 2023 to September 2024).

MOVED by Councillor M. Westhaver and Seconded by Councillor Z. de Vries: “That the Housing Affordability Standing Committee recommends that Council receive the Housing Supply report from staff.”

The Motion was then Put and CARRIED

DEVELOPMENT COST CHARGE REDUCTIONS FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The Development Cost Charge Reductions for Affordable Housing report dated November 22, 2023, from the Chief Administrative Officer was reviewed. The following was noted:

- The Minister of Housing issued an order to the District under the Housing Supply Act establishing new housing targets over a five-year period.
- Recommendations to amend the Development Cost Reduction Bylaw, 2020, No 9607 to support the development of affordable housing units by not-for-profit in eligible projects.
- The proposed amendments to Bylaw No. 9607 will demonstrate that the District is taking steps to meet or exceed housing targets identified in the Provincial Housing Order and will support not-for-profit housing providers in advancing projects that will increase the supply and diversity of rental housing in Saanich.
- Some of the strategies to increase affordable housing and promote purpose built rental housing include reducing barriers to affordable housing through incentives, tools, and policies.
- Increasing the number of low-end market affordable rental units and rental units that respond to core housing needs will be one of the most difficult gaps to fill given the cost of borrowing, development costs and the limits on grants and subsidies.
- Given the housing needs identified in the Saanich Housing Needs report and guidelines included with the Provincial Housing Order it is recommended that the reduction in development cost charges in Section 4.2 (a) be increased to 100% as outlined in the amendment bylaw attached to this report (Bylaw 9978).
- Market conditions have made this more difficult and not-for-profits require more flexibility to manage the make-up of units they operate and it is recommended that the condition related to monthly rent levels defer to partner agreements with BC Housing or CMHC as applicable.

The following was noted during discussion and in response to questions from the committee:

- As the report speaks only to rental, it was suggested that home ownership be included although there is a commitment to diversity of units.
- Overcome restriction with non-profit and recognize reduction in fees that meet affordable housing, reducing development cost rate 50% to 100% to subsidise.
- A lot more DCC (development cost charge) revenue from legalizing suites.

MOVED by Councillor Z. de Vries and Seconded by P. Lancaster: “That the Housing Affordability Standing Committee recommend that Council introduce and give first, second and third reading to Amendment Bylaw 9978.”

The Motion was then Put and CARRIED

MOVED by S. Dutchak and Seconded by P. Lancaster: “Committee recommends that Council direct staff to investigate the opportunity to expand the development cost charge reduction bylaw to include non-profit housing providers focused on affordable home ownership with similar conditions and terms outlined with a 20 year guarantee on affordability.”

The Motion was then Put and CARRIED

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 12:08 p.m.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting date will be determined at a later date.

Mayor Dean Murdock, Chair

I hereby certify these minutes are accurate.

Sydney Murphy, Committee Clerk