

MINUTES
HOUSING AFFORDABLE STANDING COMMITTEE
Held at Saanich Municipal Hall, Committee Room 2 and via MS Teams
770 Vernon Avenue
February 26, 2024 at 1pm

Present: 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

Regrets: Councillor Judy Brownoff

MINUTES

MOVED by Councillor M. Westhaver and Seconded by P. Lancaster: “That the Minutes of the Housing Affordability Standing Committee meeting held November 27, 2023, be adopted as circulated.”

CARRIED

CHAIRS REMARKS

Mayor Murdock read the Territorial Acknowledgement and the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Statement.

PROPOSED REVISIONS TO COUNCIL’S NON-MARKET HOUSING POLICY

Pam Hartling, Housing Planning and Policy Manager, presented a PowerPoint on the Proposed Revisions to Council’s Non-market Housing Policy.

The following was noted:

- Proposed revisions to the fast tracking policy will focus on affordability and housing security with projects from BC Housing, non-profit housing agencies and co-operatives as first priority.
- Purpose-built rental projects from any applicants willing to secure the rental status of all units into perpetuity by entering into a housing agreement with the District as another priority.
- Rental or strata projects from for-profit applications who are accessing a Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) or BC Housing funding program; or willing to designate some units as “affordable” for a period of at least ten years by entering into a housing agreement with the District and/or signing a covenant.
- Non-market rental, non-market ownership, co-operative housing and mixed-use residential projects owned and operated by a non-market housing provider are eligible.
- To prioritize throughout the approval process (all referral depts) from pre-app to completion.
- To provide clarity for staff when projects with key strategic interest that do not meet policy are to be prioritized.

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

- Staff continue to improve systems to expedite, streamline, and reduce burdens for fast-tracked applications. A second phase of internal work includes working with IT to digitalize application systems to advance projects faster, as well as increasing staffing resources.
- There is a challenge defining affordability for projects. With this proposal there are few eligible applications that qualify.
- The policy is not eligible for units below market, it must be a 100% non-market housing provider.
- The District has to respond and provide policy structure while relying on outside parties.
- Generally other non-eligible applications will not slow down. A challenge staff face is when the applicant changes their design and project.
- The committee stated their satisfaction of clarity this presentation brings.

MOVED by Councillor M. Westhaver and Seconded by S. Dutchak: “That the Housing Affordability Standing Committee recommends that Council amend the Non-market Housing Policy to only allow non-profit housing applications to be fast tracked.”

The Motion was then Put and CARRIED

ANNUAL HOUSING PROGRESS REPORT 2023

Pam Hartling, Housing Planning and Policy Manager, presented a PowerPoint on the Annual Housing Progress Report for 2023.

The following was noted:

- Several graphs and diagrams were displayed analyzing various housing trends, measuring housing outcomes and housing strategy progress.
- Despite a reduction in overall sales volumes due to high interest rates and rising construction costs, the Greater Victoria multifamily market demonstrates resilience as rental vacancy rates remain low.
- Government initiatives such as the GST waiver for new rental construction in some cases has been the deciding factor in proceeding with a rental development.
- BC’s Rental Protection Fund enables non-profits to prop up activity and values in the multifamily sector. Rental market investment sector predicted to “remain robust” as interest rates start to ease in 2024.
- Latest BC Stats projections estimate a 38% increase in population in 2046.
- Completed policies in 2023 include a Tenant Assistance Policy, small apartment infill zone and policy, as well as a Monitoring Program to track progress.
- Phase 1 Actions completed in 2023 include the definition of affordability to guide programs and policies, a CAC and IH program and a land capacity analysis.
- The District continues to monitor outreach and education, housing market trends, market rental viability, regional affordability CoP, and regional refugee readiness.
- The current balance of the housing fund is roughly 2 million.
- The Province implementation of Bill 44 has set housing priorities for 2024 to entail small scale multi-unit housing, transit oriented areas and changes to Public Hearing requirements. More

guidance still to come for the Housing Needs Report requirements and aligning the OCP with HNR as well as aligning the zoning bylaw with the OCP.

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

- It was stated that accommodation for commercial designations, neighborhood hubs and 15 minute communities are desired. Secondary corridors will come to life as an OCP add-on as an appendix.
- The District is currently on track to meet the Provincial housing targets. We have several support systems with grants and provincial funding.
- Low vacancy rates and high rates make a profitable market.
- Primary growth area for the District is roughly 80% and 20% in neighbourhoods through infill.
- A retail modelling capacity project is currently underway after residential is complete.
- The definition of affordability will be updated on an annual basis.
- There will be a future update to the OCP to reflect the update housing needs report which will incorporate these higher projections from the Province.
- Staff are continuing to monitor the types of applications and the market while focusing on support for non-market housing and neighborhood homes/planning. Staff are using the housing strategy framework to continue to pick priorities that reflect off market conditions.

MOVED by P. Lancaster and Seconded by Councillor M. Westhaver: "That the Housing Affordability Standing Committee receive the Annual Housing Progress Report for 2023."

The Motion was then Put and CARRIED

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 2:22 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