

MINUTES
MAYOR'S STANDING COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AFFORDABILITY AND SUPPLY
Held online via Microsoft TEAMS
April 12, 2021 at 8:30 am

Present: Mayor Fred Haynes (Chair), Councillor Zac de Vries (8:50 am), Councillor Karen Harper, Councillor Ned Taylor

Staff: Sharon Hvozdanski, Director of Planning; Cameron Scott, Manager of Community Planning; Pam Hartling, Senior Planner, Community Planning; Tania Douglas, Senior Committee Clerk

Minutes

MOVED by K. Harper and Seconded by N. Taylor: "That the Minutes of the Mayor's Standing Committee on Housing Affordability and Supply meeting held October 5, 2020, be adopted as circulated."

CARRIED

Addition to the agenda:

Topic of solar panels and shading was added to the agenda for discussion.

NEW BUSINESS

a.) Cordova Bay Local Area Plan

The Senior Planner presented information about the Cordova Bay Local Area Plan. The following was noted:

- A description was given on the levels of density and the make-up of the area along with a general history of population and growth.
- Housing goals focus most growth in the Village. There is opportunity for development on the Trio site, on Saanich's Doumac parcel and potentially on Church and institutional sites. No concept has been received from Trio to date.
- The Village housing plan is a larger area and is based on walking distance. The area includes more lots zoned at RS-6 for single family dwellings, and offers more triplex and four-plex buildings as infill options.
- Thirty year projections were done; there are about 731 units in the existing village and 3,095 units are forecast for future units. This does not include potential at the Trio site, the Ridge and general neighbourhood infill potential.
- Thinking about application to other Saanich neighbourhoods, the thought is to expand the range of housing types and densities to all villages and centres and along corridors, and also continue with neighbourhood infill where possible.
- The Housing Strategy will support housing in local areas as well district-wide approach to parking and infill incentives.

Comments/questions from committee were noted:

- The layering out of housing from the centre of the village makes sense.
- Question asked if more height could be achieved for some properties that are located against the ridge slope.
 - Staff noted there are some variations to height and the ridge reduces as you move north of the village.

- Maybe opportunity should be taken to consider if the limitations of the Official Community Plan (OCP) need to be examined. The OCP has conceptual walking distances in villages with a walk range of about 5 minutes from a village centre to the edge. The Plan could show more flexibility in these numbers by providing a range.
 - Staff noted that the OCP provides a foundation and it may be that some guidelines may need to be adjusted district-wide. The walkability number can change where there is a density bonus provision.
 - It was clarified that the village core has a five-minute walking distance, while the village neighbourhood has a 15-plus minute walking distance.
- Comment made that a new LAP has been created but is based on a 1993 Plan and concern was expressed that the LAP process feels challenging with having such a dated Plan.
- There is a lot of change happening that cannot be planned for, and this makes it difficult to proactively respond to.
- Changes in community, economic, social and environmental flows impact the urban landscape.
- There are massive retrofits happening and there are many illegal suites because the formal framework has not been able to keep up with the market changes and reality surrounding housing.
- This report shows a good example of population growth. It is difficult to keep up with the speed of change.
- This is a well put together plan but the fundamental question is are changes to the LAPs the way to go?
- The Shelbourne plan took seven years and it will be difficult to build affordable housing along the corridor. Even when a plan is approved, it is difficult to know when housing can be built as land prices, materials and labour costs rise.
- Suggestion was made to have a dinner and learn on long range planning and densification/housing.
 - Staff noted as Saanich (Greater Victoria) is unique in terms of the approach we need to take to develop truly affordable housing, discussion about 'learnings' from other cities such as San Francisco and Singapore would be beneficial.
- Question raised why zoning is RS-6 and not RS-1.
 - Staff noted that the village area is going from 930 square metre lots to 560 square metre lots, and there is better density with attached housing. Attached housing is encouraged but single family dwellings are the default because they are easier to build.
- Question raised about: low-rise designs, is the Church is interested in developing and has daycare been discussed.
 - Four-storeys and under are considered low rise structures.
 - Staff have had informal conversations with the Church with regard to affordable housing.
 - It is possible that daycare could be part of the Trio site or the Church site. The school property is short on space with the Senior centre.
- Question raised about garden suites in the area.
 - Staff noted there is a lot of interest in garden suites, and the community recognizes the need. In some areas there could be a garden suite plus a secondary suite on a parcel as there is support for multi-units.
 - If Council endorses the Cordova Bay LAP, then staff will seek direction on how to best pursue housing (eg. will BC Housing participate or will there just be market housing).
- Comment made that this is a good plan for today but not for the future.
- Need to consider how to address challenges of re-development, and suggestion made that the LAP could be adjusted to expand beyond current boundaries because there are many sub-optimal sites along the edge that offer good walkability.

- Staff noted that the overarching consideration is affordability and staff will look into this.

The Chair asked staff to double-check with Cordova Bay Elementary about potentially having a daycare on site. They also noted that a Council discussion needs to occur regarding: the best way to get information to residents; policy framework constraints; and affordability goals.

b.) Six month update – hiring of new development related staff positions

The Director of Planning noted there was a hiring freeze in early 2020 due to Covid-19. In October 2020 and January 2021 two new staff members were hired and Planning now has a full staff complement. In reply to a question they noted that hiring pools for planning positions have slightly increased in size.

c.) Infrastructure – discussion of principles

A discussion occurred regarding upcoming changes to the Subdivision Bylaw. It was suggested that clarity is needed on who the Bylaw applies to, and who is responsible for building infrastructure. In the 1990's when the Bylaw was created there were more subdivisions, however there are fewer now and it was suggested that discussion is needed on whether homeowners should be caught in the current requirements to connect to services (storm water, sewer, other).

An example was given of people building garden suites who were asked to build infrastructure for the street. Council did not anticipate this problem and should consider who is responsible for upgrades, and whether single family dwellings should be included. Question raised on the definition of a subdivision and what other categories will come into play when development occurs. Committee is interested in what the next steps are to clarify the questions surrounding the current process, as it is flawed in terms of equity. Suggestion made that perhaps a sharing factor is needed and there may be an equitable solution for both homeowners and Saanich; question asked what they do in Langford.

It was noted that municipal risk and groundwater supply/redirection are issues and it may be necessary for homeowners to contribute to water infrastructure.

The Director of Planning acknowledged there may be a more appropriate name for the Bylaw as it relates to the installation of engineering works and services rather than detailed subdivision matters. The name will be addressed as part of the ongoing updating of this Bylaw by Engineering.

*** Councillor Taylor left the meeting at 10:01 am ***

d.) Secondary suites in new single family dwellings

This item will be discussed further at the May meeting when Councillor Taylor is present. Comments noted:

- There is already a motion coming back to Council regarding secondary suites, and staff can provide an update at the next MSCHAS meeting.
- Half of new single family dwellings in Saanich have secondary suites.
- Many local governments require a secondary suite in new builds.
- The Housing Task Force discussed this issue.

- There are broader issues; suites do serve as a mortgage helper but they also make base housing more expensive.
- There are many houses that have both secondary suites and garden suites.

e.) Solar panels

Comments noted:

- Complaints have been received from people who install solar panels only to have their neighbours plant trees or build next door, causing the solar panel area to be shaded.
- There are jurisdictions that have rules regarding this and Saanich should discuss this.
- Part of the problem is the desire to have a large tree canopy conflicts with those who want to have solar panels.
- There are also height issues as some solar panels are flush and some are cantilevered.
- Panels need to be placed in a way that does not create friction.
- Solar panels are not necessarily helpful in achieving climate goals as they are not super helpful. In terms of affordability they play a role (eg. lower strata fees for some).
- Buildings are required to be solar ready but perhaps this is not desirable. A larger tree canopy is more helpful for the climate as they cool streets and enrich lives. Suggestion made that the push for solar panels are about affordability rather than for the environment.

The Director of Planning will provide a future mini-update via email regarding solar panels.

f.) Dinner and learn - further topics

Current topic on the dinner and learn list includes Proforma. Item, "Further approval delegations to staff" was removed. New topics include:

- High-level talk on the approach to long range planning; and suggestion made that this should be a regional discussion. Request for information on what San Francisco and Singapore models are doing.
- Regional Mayor's meeting noted an interest in discussion of the Urban Development Institute.
- Service delivery and the housing strategy.

ADJOURNMENT

MOVED by Councillor Harper and Seconded by Councillor de Vries, "That the Mayor's Standing Committee on Housing Affordability and Supply meeting be adjourned at 10:31 a.m."

CARRIED

The next meeting is June 14, 2021 at 8:30 am.

Mayor Haynes, Chair

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

Committee Secretary