

MINUTES
MAYOR'S STANDING COMMITTEE ON HOUSING
AFFORDABILITY AND SUPPLY
Saanich Municipal Hall, Committee Room No. 2
Monday, September 9, 2019 at 9:00 a.m.

Present: Mayor Haynes and Councillors de Vries, Mersereau and Plant

Staff: Paul Thorkelsson, Chief Administrative Officer; Cameron Scott, Manager of Community Planning; and Sarah Litzenberger, Senior Committee Clerk

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Haynes called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOVED by Councillor Plant and Seconded by Councillor Mersereau: "That the minutes of the August 12, 2019 Mayor's Standing Committee on Housing Affordability and Supply meeting be approved."

MOVED by Councillor Mersereau and Seconded by Councillor Plant "That the motion be amended that the minutes of August 12, 2019 be amended as follows: bullet point 7 on page 2 to read: "A service delivery review that was conducted over a decade ago has been implemented and ingrained in the workplace"."

The Amendment was CARRIED

A member of the committee made the following comment:

- The committee would like to see a copy of the service delivery review from the past Council.

MOVED by Councillor Plant and Seconded by Councillor Mersereau "That the motion be amended that the minutes of August 12, 2019 be amended to include the words "That the committee recommends to Council" at the beginning of the following motions:

"That staff provide information on the Housing Needs Assessment for discussion at the next committee meeting and provide updates on an ongoing basis"

"That when the joint grant application comes to Council, staff are to ensure that Saanich-specific stakeholder groups have been included in the discussions."."

The Amendment was CARRIED

The Main Motion, as Amended, was then Put and CARRIED

DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE – DISCUSSION

MOVED by Councillor Mersereau and Seconded by Councillor de Vries "That the current Terms of Reference be approved as presented".

CARRIED

UPDATE ON HIRING OF NEW DEVELOPMENT RELATED STAFF POSITIONS

The CAO made the following comments:

- Most positions that affect the committee directly are at or past the interview stage.
- The volunteer program coordinator and sports field coordinator will be forthcoming, and are not directly related to the development process.

MOVED by Councillor Plant and Seconded by Councillor Mersereau: "That the memo of the CAO dated September 5, 2019 entitled "Status – Hiring of New Development Related Staff Positions" be received for information."

CARRIED

In response to a question the CAO stated the following:

- Knowing the benefits and impacts of adding capacity by hiring additional staff could be known within six to twelve months but will vary depending on the staff experience and their understanding of Saanich's processes.

MOVED by Councillor Plant and Seconded by Councillor Mersereau: "That the motion be amended to add "and the CAO be directed to provide an update in six months on the effects of hiring new development-related staff positions"."

The Amendment was then Put and CARRIED

The Main Motion, as Amended, was then Put and CARRIED

Motion as amended:

"That the memo of the CAO dated September 5, 2019 entitled "Status – Hiring of New Development Related Staff Positions" be received for information, and the CAO be directed to provide an update in six months on the effects of hiring new development-related staff positions.

In response to questions, the CAO stated the following:

- All positions that are tailored to the development process are captured in the presented report including the Parks Development and Review Coordinator, which was approved post budget.
- An update can be provided in six months' time, but it is not known if any impact would be discernable at that time.
- The software solution to allow for a digital development process is in the early stages.
- Procurement is still needed, then implementation and training. Likely to have more impact in 2020. Cannot predict what the impacts will be and once the resources are deployed, time will be needed to see those impacts.

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The Manager of Community Planning gave a verbal report including:

- The UBCM Housing Needs Reports Program Grant Application will be on the CRD board agenda on Wednesday, September 11, 2019.
- The Hospitals and Housing Committee forwarded the recommendation to go to the CRD Board where it will identify a statement of work.
- In regards to the committee interest in municipal specific engagement it has been addressed in the statement of work, both in terms of understanding the current context and reporting out on the results.
- There is the ability for some municipalities to add on additional engagement if they would

like to supplement what is being done as part of the larger project.

- A letter will be sent to Saanich which will then be brought as a report to Council for endorsement as a grant application.

MOVED by Councillor Plant and Seconded by Councillor Mersereau “That the verbal report of the Manager of Community Planning be received for information.”

CARRIED

OTHER BUSINESS

1. CURRENT ZONING VERSUS POTENTIAL VISION OF COUNCIL

Members of the committee made the following comments:

- The Zoning Bylaw provisions are not as robust as Council and the public may expect for height and density.
- There is interest in changing certain height maximums in the Zoning Bylaw.

In response to questions the CAO stated the following:

- The Zoning Bylaw outlines the regulatory framework that represents the aspirations of the Official Community Plan and the Local Area Plans. They provide information to the communities and potential developers as seen as appropriate for a particular area.
- There is the availability to make an application outside of the existing Zoning Bylaw.
- Challenges can come up against community sentiment and overall directions set up by the municipality and long range plans.
- Nothing prevents applications from coming forward to go over the established height in the Zoning Bylaw; the Local Area Plan; or the Official Community Plan.
- If Council is interested in making those changes, it would be a big project. Unless there are very targeted locations, there would be an Official Community Plan review, which is not in the current work plan.
- Saanich is currently updating the Local Area Plans, per council's request, which has a time frame. Council could make a unilateral direction, but there will be process and political challenges.

The Manager of Community Planning stated:

- The current approach is to modernize the Local Area Plans.
- Presently, they are in discussions with the communities about the development guidelines.

Members of the committee made the following comments:

- Councillor Plant will be bringing a report to Council asking that staff to look at specific zoning stipulations in certain areas.
- What some Council members want in height and density zoning is not necessarily in alignment with what the policies permit.
- The housing dynamic has changed radically.
- There is a permissive piece within Local Area Plans for height ranges.
- There should be a Saanich-wide housing strategy to give Council some flexibility.
- The current Local Area Plan work may have to be paused to re-dedicate staff to work on a strategy.

In response to questions, the CAO stated the following:

- A report to Council will be brought forward to give an overview of the experiences of the two Local Area Plan updates. This will inform Council on the Local Area Plans process.
- Council gave direction to proceed to the remaining Local Area Plan updates. This is also the communities' expectation. To change that direction would require a consideration of

Council, which could result in the rededication of work, depending on Council's decision.

Members of the committee made the following comments:

- It would be helpful if the recommendations and report to direct staff in the Local Area Plan update process that was approved by the previous Council was circulated to the current Council.

MOVED by Councillor Mersereau and Seconded by Councillor de Vries: "That public input be permitted at this time."

CARRIED

PUBLIC INPUT

A. Cooper, Sea Wood Terrace stated:

- Three years ago, the BC Building code was updated so a wood framed construction up to six stories could be accommodated.
- Instead of reviewing all of the zoning categories, Council could adopt an Official Community Plan amendment in the neighbourhood designation that the definition around midrise, for example, be two to six storeys instead of two to four storeys.
- The Official Community Plan is the overriding document that the Local Area Plans and zoning take their cues from.

The CAO made the following comments:

- Council can give direction in terms of amending the Official Community Plan, but a statutory public process would need to follow. Council may also want to have further engagement beyond what is regulated.
- There will be neighbourhoods that have concerns about large ranges in height.

A. Cooper, Sea Wood Terrace stated:

- Council has the ability to vary height at any time under an existing zone without requiring a rezoning application.
- Density and height are not the same thing.

The Manager of Community Planning stated:

- It is important to make a distinction between zoning and policy.
- Policy change is easier than rezoning.

Members of the committee made the following comments:

- The report would be a part of a housing strategy, and will not be the centre focus of this committee.
- Our vision is not matching what we have in policy.
- Currently a developer can ask for a variance; rezoning; or an amendment to the Official Community Plan or a Local Area Plan, but this framework needs to change so that applications can fit more appropriately with our policies.

2. SERVICE DELIVERY REVIEW

MOVED by Councillor Mersereau and Seconded by Councillor Plant "That the committee recommends that Council:

- 1. Direct staff to issue a Request for Proposal for a qualified vendor to conduct, with support from Planning staff, a service delivery review of current planning services in Saanich with the objective of identifying short, medium, and long-term opportunities to improve the efficiency of services and customer service orientation; and**
- 2. Approve the expenditure of up to \$150,000 from the Council Strategic Initiatives**

Contingency Fund for the independent service delivery review of current planning services.”

Members of the committee made the following comments:

- Saanich should be a place where people want to come to, do business and build homes.
- The motion has a rough estimate of what the work could cost. It provides staff direction to help inform the scope of the RFP by setting aside a specific amount.
- If the service delivery review was undertaken, it would need to be informed by staff.
- There is concern with the length of time a review would take due to staff running at maximum capacity.
- The only way this service review could be done would be with a third party.
- If actualized, the service delivery review could still be a year away.
- In the last term, a report was received on how to expedite the process and Council adopted some of those suggestions.

In response to questions, the CAO stated the following:

- The efficiency review work is being done internally but with stakeholder groups. The results will be coming forward in the next couple of months.
- The simple action of engaging a consultant does not relieve staff of work. There will be an impact on workload and work will have to be prioritized.

Members of the committee made the following comments:

- There is concern with staffing and time limits.
- Council was elected on improving housing stocks in this term.
- This committee should recommend to Council that if we are going to look at affordability and housing supply that one of the factors is how we process applications.
- There is some value in having an external review which provides a different lens for analysis.

The Motion was then Put and CARRIED

NEXT MEETING

Monday, September 30, 2019 at 8:30 a.m. in Committee Room No. 2

MOVED by Councillor Plant and Seconded by Councillor Mersereau: “That the meeting be adjourned at 10:00 a.m.”

CARRIED

CHAIR

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

COMMITTEE SECRETARY