

MINUTES
ENVIRONMENTAL AND NATURAL AREAS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Held at Saanich Municipal Hall, Committee Room #2
March 20, 2019 at 6:04 p.m.

Present: Chair: Councillor Rebecca Mersereau

Members: Alfred Birch, Kevin Brown, Al-Nashir Charania, , George Klima, Ryan Senechal, and Carmel Thomson.

Staff: Adriane Pollard, Manager Environmental Services, Nathalie Dechaine, Manager of Community Development and Business Systems and Jeff Keys, Committee Clerk

Regrets: Kyle Empringham, Emily Truman

MINUTES

MOVED by K. Brown and Seconded by R. Charania “That the minutes of the Environmental and Natural Areas Advisory Committee meeting held February 20, 2019, be adopted as amended.”

CARRIED

CHAIR’S REMARKS

The Chair gave a brief overview of the evening’s agenda and noted that the April meeting would include an update on the Environmental Policy Framework.

After concluding their remarks the Chair provided an update on a number of Council related matters including their February 25, 2019 Notice of Motion, and subsequent report titled, Recommendations to Strengthen Tree Protection in the Short-Term and dated March 1, 2019. The report was circulated to committee on-table. The following was highlighted:

- Council passed the motion at the March 11, 2019 Council Meeting
- The motion identifies Short-term opportunities with intent of increasing effectiveness of tree bylaw and related procedures
- Motion’s recommendations include direction to staff identify appropriate updates to Tree Protection Bylaw No. 9272 and tree related processes.
- That the information resulting from the staff review be provided be considered as part of Council’s strategic planning process.
- Strategic Plan reflects the priorities of the Council of the day.
- The plan considers matters at both a high-level and operational level.
- Committee, as well as individuals can help to inform these plans, and suggestions are welcomed.
- Emerging issues can be addressed through the procedural Notice of Motion tool, which allows individual Councillors (with a seconder) to bring matters to Council’s attention and discussion in an expedient manner
- The CRD’s board recently passed a motion opposing any potential road development through the Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park and watershed.

- The watershed is the majority source of the region’s water
- The motion was in response to the Province’s recent Vancouver Island Transportation Study, which includes a feasibility study on a potential emergency detour route in the event of a closure to the Malahat.
- The CRD recently declared a climate emergency and will endeavour for carbon neutrality by 2030.
- The CRD is engaging area municipalities on the matter, Council will consider the CRD’s letter at their March 25, 2019 council meeting.

COMMITTEE MONTHLY DISCUSSION: URBAN FORESTS

Nathalie Dechaine, Manager of Community Development and Business Operations, provided an overview of Saanich’s Urban Forest. The following was highlighted:

- Value of Trees – Clerk will circulate the Regional Municipality of Halifax’s video.
- Committee’s identified value of trees include, but was not limited to: livability, wildlife habitat, soil building, connectivity between nature, sense of community.
- Trees are more than just a trunk and canopy; an equally important part of the tree is its underground structures.
- The Urban Forestry Strategy (UBF) was adopted by Council in 2010 and is the main driver of tree management work in the Parks Department. The strategy helps Saanich both protect and enhance the urban forest.
- The 7 key components of the strategy include:
 - increased canopy cover
 - an amendment to the tree bylaw
 - the develop design guidelines
 - integration with local/regional initiatives
 - development of a tree inventory
 - development of an parks operations manual
 - engage the community
- Saanich uses numerous regulatory tools to protect urban trees, including:
 - **Public lands**
 - Parks Management and Control Bylaw
 - Boulevard Regulation Bylaw
 - Streets and Traffic Regulation Bylaw
 - **Private lands** (and public)
 - Bylaw Enforcement Bylaw
 - Tree Protection Bylaw
- Tree Protection Bylaw came into effect on July 1, 2014.
- All trees in Saanich are protected a 60cm or DBH (height of tree 1.3m) unless included in the exceptions below:

Protected a 2m or more in height or 4cm or more in DBH	
Arbutus	Garry Oak
Pacific Dogwood	Pacific Yew
Protected at 30 cm or more in DBH	

Douglas fir	Grand fir
Western Red Cedar	Big Leaf Maple

- There are six (6) plus additional categories in the Tree Protection Bylaw.
- Protected means that certain rules apply, and that those rules are consistent with the Community Charter and other applicable legislation.
- Significant Trees are nominated by the community and are designated by Mayor and Council.
 - A significant tree is a protected tree with slightly different rules.
 - A permit is required for any pruning operations.
 - Very few reasons that would allow for removal (dead and dying); the de-listing process is quite significant.
- Trees are considered significant for attributes including, but not limited to:
 - Outstanding specimen
 - Historical
 - Rare Species
- Homeowner grants are available to help off-set up to 50% costs related to the maintenance and care of significant trees. Predominantly used for pruning work. Eighteen grants have been awarded since 2011 and averaging about \$447.90 per.
- Trees on A-1 and ALR land are not exempt from the Bylaw.
- There is a significant burden of proof required prior to the issuance of any permits, including a sworn affidavit. There must be a demonstrated need and purpose.
- There is no process for public consultation with regard to removing trees on ALR land.
- Parks staff are part of the Development Review Group; the group meets weekly to review all internal and external (CRD, MOTTI) engineering/development/parks projects.
- Tree removal (without benefit of permit) or damages are dealt with by a number of tools, including education and compliance, fines and penalties and requirement for replacement tree(s).
- Managing trees in parks and boulevards utilizes three strategies:
 - Retention: primary goal.
 - Mitigation: remove problems (dead limbs) if possible to retain tree.
 - Replacement: removal requires replacement - work with home owners to get buy in.
- Trees on public property have low service levels. Trees are assessed for maintenance and removal, with removal being a last resort.
- Saanich uses numerous tools to protect and enhance the urban forest, including:
 - Education (handouts, guides, social media)
 - Volunteer engagement, community events
 - Work with external partners, including community associations to help promote tree planting and community champions.
 - Work with private property owners to promote tree care.

- Engage with local tree companies with regard to rules and regulations with a focus on preventing irreversible mistakes.
- Public Tree Planting – corporate goal is no net loss.
- Saanich has 2:1 replacement ratio.
- During replacement efforts the District uses the “right tree, right place” approach to encourage planting success. This approach considers:
 - Underground and overhead infrastructure.
 - Site conditions.
 - Species type considerations including nuisance and potential size.
 - Planting locations proximity to water service.
 - Maintenance access.
 - Successful establishment.
- Challenges to the UBF include:
 - Balance of interests, values and goals.
 - Increase demand to manage existing trees and expand planting program.
 - Climate change.
 - Infrastructure damage and nuisance.
 - Availability of planting sites.
- There are numerous opportunities to support the UBF, including:
 - Highly engaged public.
 - Economic evaluation of trees.
 - New technologies and design features.
 - Information systems Creative solutions with other departments.
 - Increase tree planting sites.
- Future tools and strategies for consideration include:
 - Update Urban Forest Strategy.
 - Amend Tree Protection Bylaw.
 - Investment in new technology/techniques.

Committee discussion ensued, the following was noted:

- Saanich has a boulevard tree inventory.
- Mt. Douglas forest has data regarding variety and related carbon offsets; however, carbon sequestration data is not measured via counts.
- There is a photo inventory related to coverage.
- Strategy is at the end of its useful lifecycle; however as the program was never fully funded it is difficult to gauge how “well we did.”
- Measures included in the Chair’s report will address some performance expectations in the short-term.
- Staff are advised when items go to Council. The department only provides comments and recommendations.
- Proponents do not always incorporate staff recommendations.

The Chair thanked staff for their presentation and noted that Committee input and comments are welcomed, feel free to direct them to the Chair or staff.

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Adriane Pollard, Manager Environmental Services provided the committee members with a high-level overview of the roles and responsibility of environmental services department. The following was highlighted:

- The mandate of Environmental Services (ES) is to promote conservation and enhancement of the natural environment through development review, policy development, and education.
- The staffing compliment for ES includes six persons, including environmental planners, educators and technicians whose duties include, but not limited to:
 - Planners:
 - Processing environmental DPs, pesticide permits
 - Policy and Bylaw development
 - Review development applications
 - Educators:
 - Outreach materials
 - Outreach events
 - Quarterly newsletter
 - Environmental Awards process
- ES produces educational materials to raise awareness and increase the knowledge of the general public about stewardship of the natural environment on private land such as Our Backyard quarterly newsletter, native plant posters and plant lists, and watershed awareness.
- ES materials and displays are a regular feature of community events and municipal open houses.
- ES interact with about 2000 people at various events each year.
- ES has developed a number of uniquely Saanich, council endorsed programs for residents including:
 - Naturescape
 - Native Plant Salvage Program
 - The Knotweed Program. Since the program's inception we have accomplished at 62% reduction in viable sites (on both public and private land) in cooperation with Saanich Parks.
- ES produces tools and resources assist landowners with managing their land appropriately including:
 - Invasive species alert sheets
 - Stormwater management plans
 - Lists of recommended native plants for riparian areas and marine shorelines,
 - Industry list of qualified environmental professionals to help with the Streamside Development Permits (DPs).
- ES produce/manage several datasets for the Environmentally Significant Areas Atlas and Streamside Development Permit Area Atlas including:
 - Streams
 - Riparian Areas
 - Marine Backshore
 - Saanich ESAs
 - Isolated wetlands
 - Provincial and Federal mapping for Saanich
- ES administers permits and advises on matters including:

- Streamside Development Permit Area, Stormwater DPs for institutional land, the Pesticide Bylaw, and Natural State Covenants.
- Delegation afforded by Council means that residents do not need to approach Council for permits or approvals.
- Brochures and the website are good starting points for landowners with questions.
- These products are mailed out to all affected property owners on an annual rotational basis.
- ES is tasked with the development and implementation of policies including:
 - Streamside Development Permit Area Guidelines
 - Prospect Lake/Tod Creek Watershed Action Plan
 - Geothermal Heat Exchangers Policy
 - Pesticide Bylaw
 - Invasive Species Management Strategy
- ES' best management practices resource helps people to work in and around natural areas and minimize impacts.
- ES staff sit on many community committees and support this work as partners.
- Numerous initiatives are on the immediate horizon for ES, including:
 - Update the Pesticide Bylaw
 - Update the Streamside Development Permit Guidelines and the Atlas
 - Environmental Framework featuring a Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Stewardship Program

UPDATES

Treated Agricultural Posts:

G. Klima provided the committee with an update on his research into CCA treated agricultural posts. The following was noted:

- Although labelling remains an issue, it does not appear that the product is as readily available as first thought.
- The majority of local lumber stores do not sell the CCA treated post; however, the product was available at the Home Depot
- The Home Depot display area included tear-off warnings, although their staff were unaware of the regulations and associated risks.

Committee discussion ensued, G. Klima will circulate his findings to the committee. It was discussed that the committee would draft a letter to area local retailers on the matter. Discussion will continue at the April 17, 2019 meeting.

Environmental Awards:

- The awards are scheduled for June 17, 2019.
- The event will again feature the BCSEA youth award.
- Clerk will circulate a Doodle Poll with regard to the nomination review meeting, there was a conflict with the previously proposed date.
- Media release will be issued April 2.
- Social media will be utilized to help increase awareness.

NEW BUSINESS

Committee discussed future agenda items, it was reiterated that they would appreciate an update with regard to Biodiversity strategy/framework.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:03 PM

NEXT MEETING

Next meeting is scheduled for April 17, 2019

Councillor Mersereau, Chair

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

Committee Secretary