

MINUTES
ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL AREAS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Held at Saanich Municipal Hall, Committee Room #2
February 19, 2020 at 6:04 p.m.

Present: Chair: Councillor Rebecca Mersereau

Members: Kevin Brown, Jane Cameron, Al-Nashir Charania, Braedan Drouillard
Kyle Empringham, Nicholas Loughton, Karthik Narayan, Ryan
Senechal, Carmel Thomson and Anqian Wei.

Staff: Eva Riccius, Senior Manager Parks; Adriane Pollard, Manager of
Environmental Services; and Jeff Keays, Committee Clerk

Regrets: George Klima,

Guests: Jill Robinson, Capital Regional District, Elk/Beaver Lake Project
Coordinator.

IN CAMERA MOTION:

MOVED by Kevin Brown and Seconded by Carmel Thomson: "That the meeting be closed in accordance with the *Community Charter*, Part 4, Division 3, Section 90 (1) (b) as the matter relates to personal information about an identifiable individual who is being considered for a District award or honour (Saanich Environmental Award) or who has offered to provide a gift to the District on condition of anonymity."

CARRIED

MINUTES

MOVED by R. Senechal and Seconded by K. Brown "That the minutes of the Environment and Natural Areas Advisory Committee meeting held November 20, 2019, be adopted as circulated."

INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed the members to the first meeting of the new term. Noting that there were a number of new committee members the Chair invited a roundtable of introductions. Members shared their various backgrounds and experiences before moving into the first agenda item.

ELK/BEAVER LAKE

The Chair welcomed the Elk/Beaver Lake Project Coordinator to the meeting. The Coordinator provided the committee with an update on the status of the Elk/Beaver Lake Initiative. The following was noted:

- The Elk/Beaver Lake Initiative (EBLI) was created by the Capital Regional District (CRD) in 2016 and endeavors to undertake actions that will:

- Lead to a reduction in the frequency and toxicity of cyanobacteria (a.k.a. blue-green algae, 'BGA') blooms in Elk and Beaver Lakes,
 - Improve fish habitat, manage weed growth, and ensure continued recreational use.
- In 2016, the CRD Parks and Environmental Services provided funding for one part-time coordinator, and a budget for continued water quality monitoring, the selection and implementation of an in-lake remediation option, and preparation of a watershed management plan.
- The EBLI was established in response to public demand for focus on the struggling lake ecosystem.
- In addition to annual toxic cyanobacteria blooms, there is concern over:
 - the sustainability of a healthy fishery under low oxygen (anoxic) conditions;
 - the proliferation of nuisance aquatic weeds;
 - the presence of invasive aquatic and terrestrial species; and
 - public health and safety during water contact recreation.
- Watershed Management Plan:
 - The development of a watershed management plan is underway to address external sources of nutrients through a public engagement process.
 - External sources of nutrients come from various land use activities around the lake (urban or agricultural) as well as natural processes that bring nutrients into the lake.
 - The public were invited to comment on the draft Elk/Beaver Lake Watershed Management Plan through an online survey to support the finalization of the plan.
- In-lake Remediation Plan:
 - The development of an in-lake remediation plan is underway to address internal sources of nutrients in Elk/Beaver Lake.
 - These nutrients have accumulated over decades in the lake and bottom sediments and are continually recycled back into the water column under low-oxygen conditions.
 - The in-lake remediation process is guided by expert consultants and an intergovernmental working group.
 - On September 11, 2019 staff brought forward a Staff Report and Business Case to the CRD Board outlining the environmental, recreational, community and economic values of the lake (over \$10 million annually) and a recommendation to remediate the lake.
 - The CRD Board approved the recommendation to move ahead with the in-lake remediation of Elk/Beaver Lake, subject to receiving at least 50% capital grant funds for the project.
 - This recommendation included the installation of oxygenation systems in Elk/Beaver Lake to improve water quality at a capital cost of \$1.4 million and ongoing operational costs of \$100,000 - \$150,000 annually.

Committee discussion ensued, the following is noted:

- Specific targets will set for specific actions.
- Provincial targets will be utilized for measuring outcomes, i.e. cyanobacteria at < 50% is considered healthy.

- PH levels are hard targets.
- Three dams were installed in the 1800's to create a potable water reservoir for Victoria.
- Practice was suspended in 1915 as a result of poor water quality.
- The construction of the Patricia Bay highway in the 1950's significantly changed the hydrology of the area.
- Although water quality issues were identified in the late 80's it is suspected that they had actually arisen in the 1970's.
- Peninsula municipalities were still relying on the lake as their primary water source.
- Recreation groups have been generally supportive of the restoration efforts, as there will be minimal impact to their activities.
- The CRD will be submitting grant applications to the Province, per the Board's recommendation.
- The item could conceivably come back to the board in the event the grant applications were unsuccessful.
- There is significant interest by the Board in seeing this plan implemented successfully.

The Chair thanked the Coordinator for their presentation. The coordinator will return to committee with the final draft in Q2.

REVIEW: TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Clerk circulated the updated Environment and Natural Areas Advisory Committee Terms of Reference dated January 28, 2020. The committee reviewed the document, along with the Advisory Committee Handbook dated January 22, 2020 and the Environment and Natural Areas Advisory Committee: 2019 Reference Guide.

The Clerk reminded members the mandatory committee workshop being held in Council chambers on February 25, and 26, 2020.

CLIMATE CHANGE PRIORITIES & INVESTMENT STRATEGIES

The committee considered the Chair's memo, Climate Change Priorities & Investment Strategies, dated February 12, 2020. The following was noted:

- There is an apparent disjuncture between our climate change priorities and our investments.
- Activities funded through Saanich's investment portfolio include fossil fuel-related endeavours.
- Investment options for local governments are very limited and heavily regulated, in order to protect residents from undue risk.
- Historically there have been very few socially responsible investment options for local governments.
- The City of New Westminster has been working with the Municipal Finance Authority (MFA) to develop a new fossil-free investment fund for local governments.
- In turn, they are seeking commitments from other local governments to secure this new investment opportunity.
- The new bond fund would exclude securities of companies directly involved in the extraction, processing and transportation of coal, oil or natural gas.
- As of April 2019, Saanich invested approximately 1/3 of its holdings or \$53 million with the MFA; however, the proposed fossil-fuel free short term bond fund may be an

opportunity to align our investments with the corporate priority of supporting a transition to a carbon-neutral future.

- A recommendation has been included with the report for Council's consideration.

Committee discussion ensued, the following was noted:

- A staff report would lay out a social responsible investment framework for Council's consideration.
- The liquidity of the fund is important, as it could impact the Districts ability to access this money if/when needed.
- There are issues beyond just oil, when considering ethical/socially responsible investments, accordingly it is important that the fund be monitored and/or managed.
- How do you unpack investments in tertiary industry and businesses, such as CN? These industries play a significant role in the energy industry's supply chain.
- An expression of general support would be appropriate. What is considered socially responsible in 2020 may not hold true if/when the fund comes to market.
- Divestment and re-investment policies should be developed simultaneously.
- Council does not have a governing document to inform or support socially responsible investment.
- Incorporating socially responsible investment guidelines into our current policy would give Council options.
- The proposed recommendation could be more assertive in its language.

MOTION

Moved by A. Charania and Seconded by K. Brown "That the Environment and Natural Areas Advisory Committee recommend that: Council

- a) Pass a resolution outlining an intention to invest funds in a new MFA Bond Fund with a Standard Fossil Fuel Free Screen; and**
- b) Send a letter to the Municipal Finance Authority indicating support in principle for the new MFA Bond Fund with a Standard Fossil Fuel Free Screen – pending more information on the subject – with an estimated amount of potential investment in the fund based on staff's advice; and**
- c) Update the investment policy so it reflects an intent to use socially responsible investing when available and within the constraints of the policy and regulations governing investment activities."**

CARRIED

UPDATES

The committee received updates on the following:

- Panama Flats & Regional Foodland Trust
- 2020 Climate Action Plan: 100% Renewable and Resilient Saanich
- Tree Protection Amendment Bylaw No. 9548
- Urban Forrest Reserve Fund
- Doubling of Tree Fund – Resource Request
- Motion to Council seeking an additional \$2,000,000 to accelerate Active Transportation Plan initiatives

COMMITTEE ROUNDTABLE

The Chair invited input from the committee on items of interest for upcoming meetings. The following was noted:

- Climate Plan – Staff will attend the next meeting.
- Urban Forestry – Staff will attend a future meeting.
- Greenbelt Celebration
- Strategies for engaging the community in environmental leadership

The meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Councillor Mersereau, Chair

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

Committee Secretary