MINUTES OF THE
ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL AREAS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Held at Saanich Municipal Hall, Council Chambers
October 21, 2020

Present:	Chair:	Councillor Rebecca Mersereau
	Members:	In Person: George Klima and Carmel Thomson Via Teleconfrence: Kevin Brown, Jane Cameron, Al-Nashir Charania, Braedan Drouillard, Karthik Narayan, and Ryan Senechal
	Staff:	Lesley Hatch, Senior Manager of Water Resources; Rebecca Newlove, Manager of Sustainability; Adriane Pollard, Manager of Environmental Services; Nathalie Dechaine, Manager of Community Development - Business Systems and Megan MacDonald, Committee Clerk
	Guests:	Erhan Lee, Urban Systems Ltd.
Regrets:		Nicholas Loughton and Angian Wei

MINUTES

MOVED by C. Thomson and Seconded by K. Brown. "That the minutes of the Environment and Natural Areas Advisory Committee meeting held February 19, 2020, be adopted as circulated."

CARRIED

MOVED by C. Thomson and Seconded by A. Charania. "That the minutes of the Environment and Natural Areas Advisory Committee meeting held August 19, 2020, be adopted as amended."

CARRIED

MOVED by G. Klima and Seconded by C. Thomson. "That the minutes of the Environment and Natural Areas Advisory Committee meeting held September 16, 2020, be adopted as circulated."

CARRIED

CHAIR'S REMARKS

- The Chair thanked Saanich Staff for facilitating safe meeting participation in person and via teleconference during the current COVID-19 pandemic.
- Staff are exploring options to hold virtual meetings on Microsoft Teams, there will be the opportunity to do so in the future.

INTEGRATED STORMWATER MANAGEMENT PLANNING

The Senior Manager of Water Resources outlined the role of water based infrastructure in Saanich, which includes potable water, sanitary sewer system and the drainage system, as well as the importance of updating related data and infrastructure. Erhan Lee, a consultant with Urban Systems Ltd. provided a summary update on the Integrated Stormwater Management Plan (IMSP). The following was noted:

- Stormwater is the runoff of rainwater, hail or snow. Stormwater services cover the intended ways that Saanich regulates, operates, plans, consults with others, and decides upon stormwater related matters.
- The fundamentals of Integrated Stormwater Management are centered on a complete picture of stormwater issues, opportunities, and solutions. The fundamentals of the IMSP include:
    - Policies -Development regulations, anticipated future growth, level of service, and goals related to climate change and resilience.
    - Development Vision – Local area plans, corridor investments, land use and growth projections.
    - Environment Protection – Sensitive habitats and ecosystems, regulations from regional, provincial and federal government.
    - Drainage Servicing – Includes both engineered infrastructure and ecosystem services.
    - Stakeholder Engagement – Inter-departmental work processes, community partnerships, commitments and leadership.
- There are many conditions and drivers that encourage the creation and implementation of the ISMP now, including the growing community, climate change, watershed health/diversity, asset management, stewardship of risks and optimizing services.
- Saanich aspirations for integrated storm water are centered on community goals, regional intents, local initiatives and climate & resilience.
- The projects underway include a drainage model, developing tools that link land use and stormwater, and an inventory of environmental programs. Some priorities of these projects are to identify locations and systems for flow, climate/weather monitoring, modernize infrastructure standards in current bylaws, exploring best practices for stormwater, utility funding estimates and developing preliminary framework for natural assets.

In response to questions from members of the committee, the following was noted:

- The integrated drainage approach is intended to manage the natural assets, ecological aspects and pipe networks.
- A partnership with the Capital Regional District (CRD) has allowed an understanding of current regional projects, as well as the ability to leverage existing CRD information. It is not yet clear what funding is necessary for asset management and replacement. There may be opportunities for Federal or Provincial infrastructure grants at a later date.
- Urban Systems will be developing a hydrologic drainage model, which will capture all existing infrastructure. Information gaps have been identified and prioritized to aid the development of the drainage model. Once the model is complete staff will be able to run scenarios based on current rainfall trends, flow projections, climate change and water run off information.

- At this point in time, creating the ISMP is the priority, the metrics of success of the plan have not been established yet. The ISMP will provide stronger information to inform the asset management planning and servicing partners.
- Indicators of long term success related to resources to the ISMP may include ensuring best practices are being followed, the right infrastructure being put into place, water quality in specific areas, levels of funding, frequency and severity of floods, and erosion.
- Engineering specifications and densification goals should balance accessibility with natural features and stormwater management. Saanich should aim to demonstrate leadership and initiatives to support mature trees in hardscape environments.
- The ISMP is primarily focused on management approaches on public land, but also recognizes the role of private land owners in reducing runoff and being able to manage stormwater.
- The Cordova Bay Plan and Countryside Stormwater Plan are anticipated to be ready in time for the 2022 budget deliberations. The committee has requested a status update presentation on ISMP next year.
- Privately owned properties that have the potential to be assets to the ISMP will be identified as the inventory of natural elements is developed. There is a potential to work with private land owners at that time.

The Chair made the following comments:

- There is potential overlap with current CRD initiatives related to stormwater management planning. There is also provincial data that exists. Although provincial data may not be easily accessible, it would be worthwhile to enquire what data is available for the purpose of the ISMP.
- The CRD has recently released the Elk/Beaver Lake Watershed Plan, which has renewed community interest in remediating waterways. There may be volunteer opportunities that could be leveraged for data collection.
- Staff is working on an update to stormwater requirements for single family home developments. Currently stormwater service requirements apply to large developments, but do not apply to single family developments.

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The Senior Manager of Water Resources and E. Lee exited the meeting at 7:05 p.m.

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URBAN FORESTRY STRATEGY: TRACKING & MONITORING TREES

The Manager Manager of Community Development/Business Systems presented an update on the Urban Forest Strategy (PowerPoint on file) and answered questions from the committee as follows:

- The Tree Protection Bylaw is the primary tool to regulate trees within the district. The Urban Forest Strategy (UFS) was adopted by Council in 2010. The goal of the UFS is to protect and enhance the urban forest.
- Strategies and actions related to the UFS include developing a “No—Net Loss” Canopy Policy, restoration of natural areas, increased park tree planting (capital projects), planting partnerships and events with partners (schools, scouts, girl guides) and Schedule I in the *Subdivision Bylaw.*

- Recent actions to support the UFS include the development of an Urban Forest Reserve Fund, developing a comprehensive Urban Forest Planting Program, doubling the rate of trees planted and hiring an Urban Forest Technician.
- Rather than amendments to strengthen the Tree Preservation Bylaw, the bylaw was repealed and replaced in 2014. New amendments were made in 2019 to increase the number of replacement trees required for removals and increase the bond for replacement trees.
- Further progress to support the UFS including developing Urban Forest guidelines, formulating and implementing design guidelines, and collaboration with other levels of government, including the CRD and Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI).
- Existing mapping which measures canopy cover and impervious surfaces has provided a snapshot of changes through time. Decreasing impervious surfaces allows for opportunities to plant new trees on public and private property.
- A current challenge to managing the urban forest is that the Tree Protection Bylaw is based on the number of trees, while the UFS is focused on the size of the tree canopy. If one mature tree with a large canopy is removed, the required replacement tree will be a young tree with a small tree canopy. Bylaw requirements have been satisfied, but the canopy will have decreased. The desired outcomes of the strategies do not align.
- Resource requests to support prioritized mapping and tracking on Saanich GIS system, as well as updating the UFS were put on hold in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, however the requests will be put forward again for the 2021 budget.

In response to questions from the committee, the following comments were noted:

- The current mapping system does not have the ability to quantify the number of trees that exist, or the number that are removed within Saanich. An indication of what was being lost versus what is gained would be beneficial.
- One challenge is helping private land owners recognize that property rights and bylaws can only protect to a certain degree.
- When a bylaw protected tree is removed and a replacement tree is required, the replacement tree is then considered a protected tree. At present there is not an easy way for staff or the public to identify the protected replacement tree. We need to be able to easily identify protected trees.
- Due to climate change, it is important that diverse trees are being planted, some trees are not doing well in the current climate.

MOVED by R. Senechal and Seconded by C. Thompson: "That the Environment and Natural Areas Advisory Committee recommend that Council approve resource requests for the 2021 budget for updating the Urban Forestry Strategy and for prioritizing updated information systems and public mapping of tree assets to monitor the status of the urban forest."

Committee discussion determined that figures related to the resource requests could not be provided at the time of the meeting. Staff will provide rough estimates for the November meeting. It was noted that the motion should clarify if the funding request is for an inventory of existing trees or mapping of trees, as mapping is included in the Strategic Plan.

MOVED by A. Brown and Seconded by G. Klima: That the previous motion be tabled until the November meeting, when an update with funding request figures can be provided.

CARRIED

ROUNDTABLE UPDATE

Adriane Pollard, Manager of Environmental Services gave an update on the Environmental Atlas. Mapping is going well and the next edition will be published in the near future. The Resilient Saanich Technical Committee will receive a draft of the atlas. After feedback has been taken into consideration, the atlas will be published on GIS and a PDF will be created and available publicly. New layers include the Coastal Douglas Fir Terrestrial Ecosystem and Saanich Ecosystem Mapping. Committee members are welcome to email Adrienne if they wish to give feedback.

The Saanich Environmental Awards will be presented during the Council meeting on Monday October 26, 2020. Recipients will be recognized virtually and receive a framed certificate. The awards reception will be held in 2021, provided the COVID-19 pandemic is over.

ADJOURNMENT

MOVED by G. Klima and Seconded by C. Thomson: "That the meeting adjourn at 8:44 p.m."

CARRIED

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Councillor Mersereau, Chair

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

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Committee Secretary