

MINUTES
ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL AREAS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Held at Saanich Municipal Hall, Council Chambers
January 20, 2021 at 6:00 pm

Present: Councillor Rebecca Mersereau (Chair), Kevin Brown (via telephone), Anqian Wei (via telephone) Karthik Narayan (via telephone), Carmel Thomson (via telephone), Jennifer Grant, Ryan Senechal (via telephone), George Klima (via telephone), Al-Nashir Charania (via telephone).

Staff: Adriane Pollard, Manager of Environmental Services; and Megan MacDonald, Committee Clerk

MINUTES

MOVED by K. Brown and Seconded by R. Senechal: “That the Minutes of the Environment and Natural Areas Advisory Committee meeting held November 25, 2020, be adopted as amended.”

CARRIED

CHAIR’S REMARKS

The Chair verbally reported to the committee, the following was noted:

- There is currently a vacant position on the committee, the final member will be appointed in the near future.
- There may be an opportunity to have an informal social for members to meet virtually in the future.
- The committee had previously recommended to Council that the municipality should update the investment strategy to ensure investments are placed in green/renewable resources. The investment policy was reviewed by the Mayors Standing Committee on Finance and Governance. A staff report indicated that the current policy and investments are meeting social and environmental responsibility goals, and the committee determined that there are no changes are necessary.

B. Drouillard joined the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

COMMITTEE ADMINISTRATION

The Chair reviewed various committee administration topics, the following was noted:

- Currently Saanich cannot currently hold electronic meetings. The hardware to enable virtual Council and committee meetings will be installed in February, and the committee will likely be able to hold an electronic meeting as of March.
- The terms of reference for the committee were reviewed for information.
- The meeting dates for the committee were confirmed, the committee will meet the third Wednesday of the month, at 6:00 pm.
- New members of the committee have participated in a committee member orientation, which took place virtually.

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION:

The Chair reviewed the ongoing topics and initiatives which will be reviewed by the committee for feedback periodically. The following was noted:

- The Resilient Saanich Technical Committee (RSTC) has produced draft goals, objectives, and principles for an environmental policy framework and will be focusing on a draft Biodiversity Strategy, among other things this year and next.
- Engineering is currently working on an Integrated Stormwater Management Project, which is a multi-year project. Updates will be presented as targets are achieved.
- Council has recently approved funding for the Urban Forestry Strategy, the committee will receive updates on the project as it progresses.

The committee discussed topics and initiatives that are of interest to committee members, the following items were noted:

- Outreach to engage the community.
- Human/wildlife conflict, specifically human/beaver conflict in watersheds. The Saanich policies to address these issues are vague or non-existent.
- The status of work that is being done related to the environmental aspects of the Strategic Plan, including initiatives and actions, if they are funded or partially funded, and the percent to completion.
- The Capital Regional District (CRD) proposed expansion of Hartland landfill.
- How Saanich can support various stakeholders related to the use of parks, increased visitor use due to the pandemic, and nature based opportunities for restoration.
- The value of local food production, how to support food production and create community gardens. There is interest in increasing biodiversity in suburban areas, possibly by retrofitting lawns to allow more native flowers and species to exist.
- Staff is currently working on a report outlining an overhaul to streamside development area permit guidelines as there have been changes in Provincial legislation.
- Staff is also working on a report to Council which outlines the completion of the first Resilient Saanich milestone and action items.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR THE ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY FRAMEWORK

The Manager of Environmental Services presented the Resilient Saanich Draft Goals and Objectives overview (Powerpoint on file). The following was noted:

- Resilient Saanich is an environmental policy framework of existing/improved/new bylaws, policies, strategies, programs and procedures. This includes the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy, the Climate Plan and Enhanced Stewardship Opportunities.
- The RSTC has been established to work with staff and consultants to advise and share expertise. The first action item is to propose the project goals and objectives.
- The Draft Goals and Objectives have been created and will be published in the near future. There will be public engagement to gather feedback on the proposed vision, principals, goals and objectives. This engagement will include virtual open house sessions, feedback forms, videos, as well as targeted stakeholder engagement.
- When the engagement phase is complete, the RSTC will consider the feedback. Staff will present proposed goals and objectives to Council, Council will decide on the final goals and objectives.

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

- Given the different ecosystems between rural areas and urban areas in Saanich, there is interest in balancing the voices that represent both.
- The RSTC is creating an integrated approach that will apply to all departments within Saanich, aligning policies and procedures for all.

URBAN FORESTRY STRATEGY: TRACKING AND MONITORING TREES

Further to discussions from the October 2020 and November 2020 meetings, a discussion on the Urban Forestry Strategy took place. The following was noted:

- A better understanding of the scope of the tree mapping is essential. The scale of the inventory may be too vast if we are not being specific on land use.
- The CRD involvement and data will be useful for the landscape level and canopy cover analysis.
- The canopy cover analysis is of interest, as well as why is it declining. It would be useful to have an idea of the number of tree removals and replacements.

MOVED by C. Thomson and Seconded by K. Brown, “That the Environment and Natural Areas Advisory Committee recommends that the discussion of the Urban Forestry Strategy is postponed until the draft 2021 budget has been released.”

CARRIED

ROUNDTABLE

The following was noted:

- The Chair gave an update to the plastic bag ban, which was delayed because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Implementation will move forward in spring 2021.
- The CRD and Habitat Acquisition Trust (HAT) have entered an agreement to purchase a property on Mountain Road in rural Saanich so that it can be permanently designated an urban forest park. HAT is currently fundraising to cover a portion of the cost.
- The RSTC draft plan will be made public this week.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:13 p.m.

NEXT MEETING

Next meeting is Wednesday February 17, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.

Councillor Mersereau, Chair

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

Committee Secretary