

MINUTES
ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL AREAS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Held at Saanich Municipal Hall, Council Chambers
March 17, 2021 at 6:03pm

Present: Councillor Rebecca Mersereau (Chair), Karthik Narayan (via telephone), Tiffany Joseph (via telephone), Jennifer Grant (via telephone), George Klima (via telephone), Ryan Senechal (via telephone), Braedan Drouillard (via telephone), Carmel Thomson (6:13 p.m., via telephone), Kevin Brown (6:15 p.m., via telephone).

Staff: Adriane Pollard, Manager of Environmental Services; Rebecca Newlove, Manager of Sustainability; and Megan MacDonald, Committee Clerk.

Regrets: Anqian Wei and Al-Nashir Charania.

MINUTES

MOVED by R. Senechal and Seconded by B. Drouillard: "That the Minutes of the Environment and Natural Areas Advisory Committee meeting held February 17, 2021, be adopted as circulated."

CARRIED

*** C. Thomson entered the meeting at 6:13 p.m. ***

AGENDA

MOVED by R. Senechal and Seconded by B. Drouillard: "That the Agenda of the Environment and Natural Areas Advisory Committee meeting of March 17, 2021, be adopted as circulated."

CARRIED

*** K. Brown entered the meeting at 6:15 p.m. ***

CHAIR'S REMARKS

The Chair gave a brief update to the committee, the following was noted:

- Work is underway to install technology which will enable staff to facilitate Microsoft Teams Meetings in Council Chambers. The April meeting will likely be held virtually.
- Previous recommendations to Council related to Bowker Creek and the Elk/Beaver Lake Management Plan will move forward when the staff reports are completed.
- The revenue from the recently implemented Development Cost Charges Bylaw contributes to acquire and develop parkland.

SAANICH CLIMATE PLAN REPORT CARD

The Manager of Sustainability provided a verbal update on the Climate Plan Report Card (Powerpoint on file) the following was noted:

- The Climate Plan is a detailed plan to reduce Saanich’s greenhouse gas emissions. There are six focus areas, which detail 131 actions to achieve the Climate Plan goals.
- The Climate Plan Report Card is an annual report on progress made towards the goals and actions outlined in the Climate Plan.
- Saanich received an “A” grade through the global Carbon Disclosure Project for monitoring and reporting on sustainability initiatives and environmental impacts.
- Saanich has changed how we report emissions regionally, as well as some global methodology changes. These changes have improved the accuracy of reporting.
- Considerable progress was made in 2020 despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, which had an impact on financing and community engagement opportunities.
- Highlights of the actions taken are provided, along with progress on corporate targets, overall progress on 2020 actions, progress by focus area and detailed summaries.

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

- The Climate Plan highlights the importance of enhancing biodiversity in our region.
- The Resilient Saanich Technical Committee (RSTC) work plan includes investigating opportunities to strengthen Climate Plan recommendations and better ways to integrate the climate adaptation actions with the ongoing biodiversity strategy work.
- Many 2021 actions are funded or have grant funding available, however some items are subject to the 2021 budget deliberations.
- There are some grant opportunities available through the Provincial and Federal government. Adaptations to the Climate Plan actions are being made to prioritize future projects which could potentially be funded earlier through current grants.
- Provincial targets (such as CleanBC) are linked to territorial based emissions.
- Saanich reports on both a territorial emissions inventory and a consumption based emissions inventory. Local residents have a significant impact on emissions produced elsewhere in the world based on choices they make. Textiles and food production are major contributors to emissions.
- E-Bikes, E-Mobility, electric vehicles and public transit are important to help reach transportation goals, progress towards the goals is being made.
- The plan details the amount of agricultural land within Saanich boundaries, as well as targets including increasing the amount of food that is grown and consumed locally.
- The Climate Plan metrics and goals may change based on RSTC suggestions.
- The Urban Sustainability Directors Network provides resources on equity, which have been used to apply an equity lens to the Climate plan and to some of the resulting actions. Energy poverty is an issue for many residents, staff are working on programs to help lower income individuals make progress on Climate Plan goals.

The Chair noted the following:

- A report requesting that the Mayor advocate for the Provincial Government to enable municipalities to use five new policy tools to reduce greenhouse gas emissions with existing buildings and new buildings was recently supported unanimously by Council.
- Members of Council have recommended that Council consider taking part in the Speed Limit Pilot Program at a lower speed than previously considered.
- The climate change objectives are integrated and supported across all departments, including a cross departmental working group that helps report on progress.
- It is important to consider success of the Climate Plan goals, including how we report on climate change. Progress may be equated with taking action, however it is important to remember the goal of reducing emissions and the impacts of the actions.

*** K. Brown exited the meeting at 7:15 p.m. ***

URBAN FORESTRY STRATEGY: TRACKING AND MONITORING TREES

Further to discussions from the October 21, 2020, November 25, 2020, and January 20, 2021 meetings, a discussion on the Urban Forestry Strategy took place. The following was noted:

- The Parks Department has submitted resource requests for approximately \$85,000 for GIS mapping technology and additional staff trained to use the new technology.
- Additional information provided by the Manager of Urban Forestry is appreciated.
- The GIS layers, inventory components and staff training aspects are supportable.
- The information provided about the resource requests clarifies the scope of work, and alleviates most of the concerns that the committee had based on previous information.

Motion from the meeting of November 25, 2020:

“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.”

MOVED by C. Thomson seconded by R. Senechal “That the motion be amended to: “That the Environment and Natural Areas Advisory Committee recommend that Council approve resource requests for the 2021 budget related to the Urban Forestry Strategy and for by prioritizing updated information systems and public mapping of tree assets to monitor the status of the urban forest”.”

The amendment was CARRIED

**The main motion, as amended was CARRIED
With G. Klima opposed.**

Main Motion, as Amended:

“That the Environment and Natural Areas Advisory Committee recommend that Council approve resource requests for the 2021 budget related to the urban forest by prioritizing information systems and public mapping of tree assets to monitor the status of the urban forest”.

POLLINATORS

Tiffany Joseph, a Certified Pollinator Steward with the Island Pollinator Initiative shared information on native pollinators and how to support them. The following was noted:

- Vancouver Island is home to a wide variety of solitary bees and bumble bees, honey bees are not native. Solitary bees nest in plants with hollow stems such as golden rod or in holes in the ground. Mason bee boxes can be installed to help support them.
- Pollinators prefer native plants. The Western Bumble Bee is endangered, it is important to participate in creating habitat and forage for bees, especially native plants.
- Stinging nettle is great for attracting butterflies and hummingbirds. Some non-native plants can be habitat for predatory mites or parasites.
- Solitary bees are gentle compared to honey bees. Typically solitary bees do not sting unless their life is in danger. Solitary bee stings usually do not cause those with allergies to react in the same way that a honey bee sting would.

Following comments from members of the committee, the following was noted:

- Saanich recommends Naturscaping using native plants through the development process. There is a Saanich list of plants preferred for boulevard planting, however the recommendations are mainly based on safety, such as maintaining sightlines, height considerations near powerlines and the impact of roots on underground infrastructure.
- Council has passed a motion for the RSTC to consider threats and opportunities related to pollinator habitat as they undertake their work.
- The RSTC could suggest introducing pollination criteria in boulevard planting checklist.
- There is interest in having informational signage about pollinators for the community.
- Plants that could be included on the boulevard planting list to support pollinators are camas, snowberry and sea blush. The quarterly “Our Backyard” newsletter often contains messaging on how to be bee friendly, social media options may be beneficial.

ROUNDTABLE

The following roundtable updates were discussed:

- Council has recently decided to maintain Panama Flats primarily as a park for wetland and ecosystem purposes, with the possibility of small scale food production in future.
- The Capital Regional District (CRD) recently presented information to Council on the Draft Solid Waste Management Plan. The plan will reviewed, and the final draft be presented to the Environmental Committee, and then the CRD Board in the spring.
- The public input on the Draft Goals and Objectives for the Resilient Saanich Framework is nearing completion. There will be a comprehensive report detailing all feedback received, which will be made available to the public and the committee.
- The W̱SÁNEĆ Leadership Council (WLC) is working with Saanich Peninsula Environmental Coalition on a bioregional framework.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:27 p.m.

NEXT MEETING

Next meeting is Wednesday April 21, 2021

Councillor Mersereau, Chair

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

Committee Secretary