

**MINUTES**  
**ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL AREAS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
Held at Saanich Municipal Hall, Council Chambers  
**November 25, 2021 at 6:31 pm**

Present: Councillor Rebecca Mersereau (Chair), Councillor Karen Harper, Kevin Brown, Al-Nashir Charania, Braedan Drouillard, Jennifer Grant, George Klima, Karthik Narayan, Ryan Senechal and Anqian Wei.

Staff: Eva Riccius, Senior Manager Parks; Nathalie Dechaine, Manager of Community Development/Business Systems; Adriane Pollard, Manager of Environmental Services; Carolyn Richman, Environmental Education Officer; and Megan MacDonald, Senior Committee Clerk.

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**MINUTES**

**MOVED by K. Narayan and Seconded by K. Brown: "That the Minutes of the Environment and Natural Areas Advisory Committee meeting held October 20, 2021, be adopted as amended."**

**CARRIED**

**CHAIR'S REMARKS**

The Chair gave an update on recent topics of interest and accomplishments of 2021, the following was noted:

- The Chair of the committee will be Councillor Karen Harper, as of December 1, 2021.
- Urban forestry mapping funding was approved by Council in the budget.
- Council supported recognizing the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Saanich's Greenbelt Study.
- New committee appointments have been approved and will be announced once all members have been notified.
- The work done by outgoing Committee members A. Charania and K. Brown was recognized.

**OVERVIEW OF SAANICH'S NATURESCAPE PROGRAM**

The Environmental Education Officer introduced an overview of the Saanich Naturescape Program. The following was noted:

- Environmental Services has been the lead on internal and external policies.
- The Naturescaping Program (NP) focuses on creating, maintaining and enhancing wildlife habitat and native biodiversity.
- The NP encompasses properties of all sizes and promotes best practices in dealing with gardening, respecting waterways and being neighborly.
- Some of the NPs benefits include biodiversity conservation; water conservation; cost savings; improved wildlife habitats; the reduction of climate impacts, toxic chemicals and invasive plant species.
- Varying Saanich policies and plans take the NP into consideration or propose taking aspects of the NP into consideration.
- The NP incorporates public outreach activities, web-based resources, handouts, local art and recommendations to developers.

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

- The NPs endeavours are encouraging and valuable to the community.
- It was suggested to ensure the longevity of native trees in urban areas, incentives may need to be introduced.
- The NP could look into adding resources for residents to appropriately deal with dead or dying wood as well as tree removal.
- Planting native Dogwood trees was recommended for climate adaptability.
- There is no designated budget currently for the Naturescape program.
- A request was made by the Environmental Education Officer to bring forward a motion at a later date to provide support for further development of the NP.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF PARKLAND IN GROWING NEIGHBOURHOODS**

The Senior Manager of Parks introduced an overview of the work done towards building a strategy around park acquisition. The following was noted:

- It was argued that parks enhance city life, community feeling, quality of life, health benefits and decrease social isolation.
- Google Analytics data has shown that parks usage within the District of Saanich has significantly increased in the past two years.
- There are currently 171 green spaces in the District of Saanich.
- Based on proposed developments, Saanich is park deficient by approximately 36 hectares.
- Key focus areas with regards to park acquisition currently include filling in gaps in underserved neighbourhoods as well as purchasing land adjacent to existing parks.

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

- A request to Council has been made by ENAC to budget \$750,000 for park acquisition in 2022 as well as raise contributions year after year.
- Council dedicated additional funding to the King's Road property to ensure its use as parkland.
- The cost of purchasing a single neighbourhood park was indicated as ranging from approximately \$5,000,000 to \$8,000,000.

## **ROUNDTABLE**

The following was noted:

- The Provincial government is behind schedule in legislation that would permit municipalities in banning natural gas connections for new builds.
- The Province released the Clean BC Roadmap.
- Supplemental funding was approved by Council for the Saanich led E-bike rebate program due to the success of the program.
- The E-bike program offers residents rebates for the purchase of new E-bikes and is tied to income level.
- The Resilient Saanich Technical Committee is hoping for opportunities to engage with First Nations for their insight into developing a Biodiversity Strategy.
- A reminder of the Significant Tree Program was made for public awareness.
- The Committee Clerk noted that a motion of support will be going forward regarding the accessible urban forest at the December 6<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

**NEXT MEETING**

Next meeting is Wednesday January 19, 2022.

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Chair

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

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Committee Secretary