

MINUTES
PLANNING, TRANSPORTATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Held via Microsoft Teams, May 13, 2021 at 5:30 pm

Present: Councillor Zac de Vries (Chair), Ericka Amador, Sophia Baker-French, Sonja Cunningham, Lisa Gunderson (5:50 pm), Richard Michaels, Doug Pascoe, Shawn Steele (5:40 pm)

Staff: Troy McKay, Senior Manager, Transportation and Development Services; Cameron Scott, Manager of Community Planning; Shari Holmes-Saltzman, Manager of Current Planning; Gina Lyons, Senior Planner; Tania Douglas, Senior Committee Clerk

Regrets: Brittany Higginson, Peter Rantucci

Minutes

MOVED by E. Amador and Seconded by R. Michaels: “That the Minutes of the Planning, Transportation and Economic Development Advisory Committee meeting April 8, 2021, be adopted as circulated.”

CARRIED

CHAIR’S REMARKS

The Chair informed members that budget discussions are completed, and the hiring of an Economic Development Officer was approved for this year. An economic development strategy itself is not funded and conversations will be held about the role of the development officer. It is the Chair’s opinion that we should develop a strategy in-house.

PARKING & BICYCLE PARKING REQUIREMENTS AND STANDARDS

The Senior Planner, Current Planning provided information on Section 7 of the Zoning Bylaw (off street parking), and the following was noted:

- Parking requirements are based on use: residential developments base parking on the type of development and the number of dwellings. Commercial parking is based on floor area.
- In September 2019 Council approved requirements for electric vehicle (EV) charging. Regulations have 2 tiers of EV infrastructure: energized spaces and electric vehicle supply spaces. Energized spaces are either a fixed number or a percentage of the required parking.
- Bicycle spaces are divided into two classes. Class I is secure weather-protected space, usually for residents or employees, and class II is for short term visitors (eg. bike rack in front of a building)
- Bicycle space requirements for residential developments are based on the number of units in the dwelling. Apartment/townhouse requirements are one class I stall per unit and six class II spaces per building.
- There is a Council Policy, “Saanich Bicycle Space Guidelines” that are to be used alongside the standards in the Zoning Bylaw.
- In November 2020 the Electric Mobility Strategy was adopted, this included 11 electric bike actions to support electric bikes. A number of amendments will be made to the Zoning bylaw to support the strategy.
- New developments are often offering more facilities than the Bylaw requires.

- Staff have applied for a UBCM grant to retain a consultant to undertake a parking analysis and review for vehicles and bicycles.

The Chair thanked staff and requested that this presentation be shared with committee members for information.

In reply to committee questions, the Manager of Current Planning and the Senior Planner stated:

- The UBCM grant was discussed at Council last Monday night. Staff will find out in August whether they are successful in obtaining this \$500,000 grant.
- A portion of the grant would be to hire a staff person who could manage a consultant, and also perform the necessary work.
- Recommendations received from this committee last year regarding parking will be forwarded to the new consultant. Planners have received many recommendations that will be forwarded on.
- Requirement on EV charging stations for multi-family residences are level 2 charge stations. Single family dwellings will only require level 1 charging.
- There is also the ability to have load management and sharing in multi-family dwellings; there are different configurations that could be used.
- Consideration of the minimum off-street parking requirements in areas near transit would be done through the review and analysis that would come out of the work done with the UBCM grant funds.
- If committee members have any future questions, please email Gina Lyons or Shari Holmes-Saltzman. Committee members will be updated regarding the result of the UBCM grant application.

It was noted there is a new hydrogen station being built at the Quadra and McKenzie Esso station and the question was raised about possibly of supporting hydrogen vehicles in the future. Saanich could think about being leader in hydrogen power as well.

MOTION: Moved by S. Baker-French and Seconded by R. Michaels, “The Planning, Transportation and Economic Development Advisory Committee recommends that if the grant application to UBCM for the Development Process Improvement Project is not successful, Council consider using the Council Strategic Initiatives Fund to move this work forward.”

CARRIED

***** The Manager of Current Planning and the Senior Planner left the meeting at 5:55 pm *****

POPLAR AND CEDAR HILL INTERSECTION

The Chair noted that there is interest in opportunities in the Poplar and Cedar Hill area and asked Engineering staff to provide some information on this intersection. The Senior Manager, Transportation and Development Services noted:

- This intersection is located east of Shelbourne Street and has been looked at many times by the Engineering department. This is a complicated area with three intersections and high traffic flows.
- Many small upgrades have been done over the last 15 years, and today very low rates of collision occur in this location.
- In 2004 a roundabout was designed and completed for this intersection. A number of residents who were working with Council put the brakes on the project so it was not built. Grant funding that was in place for the project was lost.

- One complication of the intersection is a large significant Oak tree in Rendle Green, which is an area maintained by the Parks department. This is a very restrictive area with limited opportunity on what can be done.
- There are not a lot of plans for changes for this intersection. The UVic bike lane project is planned to run through here (protected bike lanes).
- The No.14 bus travels up Richmond Avenue and turns right on Poplar (and travels the reverse direction as well) and is one of the busiest bus routes. Any future works in this area has to accommodate transit movement.

The Chair noted there has been much public discussion on this area and acknowledged the challenges highlighted by staff. In reply to a questions the Senior Manager, Transportation and Development Services stated:

- All technical challenges in installing a roundabout were solved, other than the significant tree needing removal. The location of the tree makes it difficult to build anything else at this intersection but the rest of the design worked fairly well.
- Design standards in roundabouts have evolved since 2004 and there would be some changes in scale for today's standards.
- Staff consider all factors at intersections, and use an "incidence per million vehicles ratio" that averages out the number of vehicles entering intersections and the number of accidents.
- Changes made to this intersection have fixed all conflict points; it may feel awkward but it is not unsafe or a high crash area. This intersection is in the top 20 for accidents. With this in mind it would be difficult to recommend removal of the tree based on traffic safety as it is not an issue.

Committee discussion:

- The majority of interest in the area is not about safety as much as the use of space. This is an awkward area allocated to vehicles but is not necessarily moving them around most efficiently.
- The nearby Island Health property between Poplar and Cedar Hill Cross Road is empty and if that property is redeveloped there may be opportunity to make improvements.
 - The Senior Manager of Transportation and Development Services reported that in 2004 there were surplus lands developed with the roundabout design and included more greenspace.
- Comment made that if looking for better use of public space, there is piece in front of the hospital at the end of Richmond, that could be used as possible green space and changes could be made. This could be made accessible at the back of the plaza.
- Committee members expressed interest in the top 10 least safe intersections.
 - Engineering staff, along with Saanich Police will be invited to attend the discussion about high crash intersections to speak to what they are doing to reduce crashes. This item will be put forward on a fall agenda.

The Chair noted the potential of the Island Health property at this intersection and may inquire about their plans for this property. Saanich has an Active Transportation Plan and the redevelopment of this property will be significant to this.

SPEED LIMIT REDUCTION PILOT PROJECT UPDATE

The Chair discussed the application to the Province under the Motor Vehicle Act for a pilot project for a default speed of 30km/h for roads without a yellow line.

The Senior Manager of Transportation and Development Services noted:

- A 40 km/h pilot was proposed originally, but this changed to 30km/h. This project is in a holding pattern as other local governments decide if they want to join a regional

approach. So far Saanich, Esquimalt, View Royal, Oak Bay, Sidney, Victoria are part of this. At this point Colwood, North Saanich, and Langford have declined to join.

- Provincial regulations around e-scooters are now in place. There is a lot of information online on the provincial website on motor vehicle pilot projects.
- Sometime this spring the province will be announce phase 2 intake which will allow the municipality to apply for the pilot project.
- Timelines and processes unknown as this is in the province's hands. Staff have done a lot of pre-work to make the application smooth.
- It would be appropriate to receive an update after the province has released more information.

The Chair expressed concern that the province may be slower on responding to this issue, as they need to focus on economic recovery and COVID related items. He looks forward to receiving an update in the future after the province has responded.

***** The Senior Manager of Transportation and Development Services left the meeting at 6:22 pm *****

HOUSING STRATEGY

The Manager of Community Planning spoke to the recommendations from the Housing Strategy Task Force (HSTF) and stated:

- They are nearing the end of the process and are hoping to take final strategy to Council at the end of June.
- The HSTF was created in June 2020 and over 13 meetings they developed recommendations; these were recently put out to the public via survey for feedback and over 1000 results were received.
- Staff are reviewing the survey results, getting committee feedback and doing a staff review to see if any clarifications or edits needed to task force recommendations before they are incorporated into the Housing Strategy.
- The housing needs report was endorsed by Council in November 2020.
- Some of the key components of his report is looking at current housing situation and the projected demand in a 10-year period. This will be regularly updated to help inform planning and better understand the needs in Saanich.
- Areas of key needs include affordable housing, rental housing, housing for seniors, housing for people with disabilities, one person households, lone parent households and families, as well as housing for individuals experiencing homelessness.
- The Housing Strategy will direct the framework, and is unique in that it looks at housing across the whole spectrum, including diversity, supply and affordability.
- There is a need to have regular check-ins and look at where we are directing our actions.
- The task force was a group that was selected by Council and intended to pull together a diverse group representing many segments of the community. They worked together to collaboratively develop solutions.
- Key recommendations form the core content of the housing strategy.
- There were 70 actions which have been prioritized, and Council had previously had referred some directions that the task force helped provide input.
- The HSTF also provided in put on the Uptown Douglas Plan, the Community Amenity Contribution program, and the Development Cost Charge Reduction Bylaw.
- Task force recommendations have guiding principles; seven focus areas were identified. Five were in the initial terms of reference and two were added in by HSTF.
- The top ten priority actions were shared.

The Chair noted that this is a wholesome and comprehensive strategy. Many community strategies only focus on non-market housing and have to revisit their plans. This Strategy is focused on what Saanich can do and will also include other levels of government. Housing affordability is one of the most pressing challenges in the community; and communities are changing faster than we can plan for.

In reply to questions from Committee members, the Manager of Community Planning stated:

- Affordable housing is defined as housing that is not over 30% of a person's income, and is suitable for their needs.
- There are many different income groups. Some groups require subsidy, and in those cases where the market cannot provide affordable housing, BC Housing and Capital Regional Housing needs to step in for them.
- Housing is a very dynamic and we need to constantly adjust and observe trends.
- Housing is a deeply personal topic for people and there are many differing opinions.
- Saanich does not have not a lot of surplus land, though there are some properties throughout the district that could be suitable for housing. Saanich did offer land beside the Hall for Modular housing but this space was found to be unsuitable.
- Regarding illegal suites; there are challenges with existing buildings getting up to Code requirements. New builds are being integrated with legal suites as it is easy to do with a new build.

Committee discussion:

- Regarding the wording around identifying potential surplus of Saanich property, it was suggested that staff change the word to "land" instead of "property" so people don't think there is a structure on the land.
- Suggestion made that there is a missing middle income housing policy piece; not only low income housing is needed, there are also families with multiple working adults who cannot enter the market.
- People aging in place do not leave us in a strong dynamic economic place and people end up being shut out of the market.
- Saanich owned property inventory is in the housing strategy; how is this idea of priority to be balanced with other crises (eg childcare crisis,). Suggestion made that municipal lands could be used to support this priority as well. There could be very meaningful but competing priorities.
 - Staff noted that ultimately this is for Council to consider and there is the ability to co-locate daycare with housing together.
- The new Economic Development Officer could look at the real estate market issue.
- Concern expressed about supportive housing: when communities are not properly prepared to supply supportive housing from a resource perspective (eg. having supports in place for social integration, policing, mental health etc.). It is important to make sure resources are in place and integration can be done in a positive way. If this is a priority it needs to be done in a fully supportive way.
- The challenge of multi-unit development parking ratios are of concern. If we are changing the Zoning Bylaw is there consideration to lower parking ratios to make the developments feasible.
 - Staff replied that parking is a major challenge; ratios on the books are not commiserate of need. A grant application has been put forward to change parking standards. This is a big priority on a number of different fronts. Many Zoning proposals already that come forward are in the .5 to 1 range if they are near transit corridors.
 - Staff are not sure if there will be a link between Service Review and Development Process Review.
 - Changes to parking regulations must be based on evidence; data is needed.

- Regarding illegal suites: Saanich has been not engaged in the practice of moderating suites unless reported. No clear path has been established with rules around these suites. It would be good to not penalize people helping others with their living conditions.
- The daycare issue is interesting and there are private government initiatives for this. Some developers want to incorporate new builds with daycare centres as a standard model for future builds.
- A question was raised regarding development approval.
 - Staff noted that KPMG has been retained to look at Saanich's processes and look at efficiencies. This will take a couple months and then Council will decide on how to act on the recommendations.

The Chair noted:

- We will want to ensure there are enough housing options to support a rich mixture of people. It can be a struggle to find a way to do this.
- He is having ongoing discussion with the Building, Bylaw, Licensing and Legal department regarding options for putting a Notice on Title for homes with suites. Also having discussions about business licences for people renting homes and looking at long term house rental regulatory aspects.
- Council will be looking at a way to reconcile housing issues and outcomes with the Saanich identity. We want to deliver something that appeals to the broader community.

ROUNDTABLE

- Member is looking forward to the new Economic Development Officer position and suggested committee members could be involved in determining the scope of this position.
- Request made for information on Saanich's traffic calming policy.
- Appreciation expressed for tonight's presentations as they were helpful and informative.
- Outcome from the last meeting: staff examined the West Saanich Road intersection that was lagging and made corrections to the pedestrian crossing.
- The Local Area Planning (LAP) work is underway; it may be of benefit to look at the approach taken in planning the LAP's.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:32 pm. The next meeting is Thursday, June 10th.

Councillor de Vries, Chair

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

Committee Secretary