

MINUTES
PLANNING, TRANSPORTATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Held via Microsoft Teams, Saanich Municipal Hall
June 10, 2021 at 5:47 pm

Present: Councillor Zac de Vries (Chair), Sophia Baker-French, Sonja Cunningham, Richard Michaels, Doug Pascoe

Staff: Cameron Scott, Manager of Community Planning; Pam Hartling, Senior Planner; Tania Douglas, Senior Committee Clerk

Regrets: Brittany Higginson, Lisa Gunderson, Ericka Amador, Shawn Steele, Peter Rantucci

Minutes

Due to a lack of quorum the May 13, 2021 minutes were not adopted.

CHAIR'S REMARKS

The Chair reported that committee member Ericka Amador has submitted her resignation from the committee as she is moving out of province.

It was noted that there is no quorum tonight and members are unable to make motions, however, consensus on any items can be included in the minutes for the record.

CORDOVA BAY LOCAL AREA PLAN

The Manager of Community Planning introduced the Senior Planner who provided information regarding the Cordova Bay Local Area Plan. The following was noted:

- Staff would like committee input on the proposed LAP as per Council's referral.
- The LAP is part of Official Community Plan (OCP) framework and incorporates the latest municipal direction including Indigenous content, housing policy, climate change and the Active Transportation Plan.
- The process involved lots of community input via a survey to establish community vision and priorities, a village design charrette, and four community workshops were also held. Extensive consultation has held with the W̱SÁNEĆ First Nation who provided feedback.
- The project Advisory Committee met 13 times and a survey of the draft plan was done at the end along with an open house where valuable feedback was received.
- Land use in Cordova Bay is mostly residential; this area has large lots with single family dwellings (80%), with high rates of ownership and low rentals, with some housing vulnerability as there are limited options to age in place in this community.
- The focus of the Proposed Plan with respect to PTED is land use by sub-area, expanding housing diversity, integrating land use and transportation, local economic development opportunities and improved references to Indigenous places and history.
- The plan focuses growth in the Village, and the Trio site and looks at long range planning in the area.
- This is a more remote community resulting in car dependence and an orientation towards vehicles in urban design.
- The Lochside Regional trail runs through the community along with many local pathways.

- There is small scale commercial business, some is regional and some is tourist focused (eg. Mattick's Farm). There is a limited amount of retail and services in the community and enhancing this is part of plan.
- Missing in the current LAP and also in the community is an Indigenous presence.
- The updated Plan provides land use direction and expands housing diversity, policy around economic development opportunities, and is more inclusive of Indigenous culture.
- Land use in the area will continue to be primarily residential. The approach to infill is through conversions and house-plexes on single family lots. Greenspace and neighbourhood character will be maintained while allowing for infill density.
- The Plan supports maintaining the urban containment boundary and focusing growth in village and Trio site and supports a range of housing forms.
- The Plan supports the neighbourhood by maintaining lot size but has more infill opportunities.
- The Plan supports attached townhouses and apartments in the village. Attached housing is supported around Claremont Secondary School on the Ridge.
- Maps of the neighbourhood showing proposed infill were shown.
- Within neighbourhood areas, the plan supports a range of houseplexes including duplex, duplex plus fourplex on corner lots, and triplex plus fourplex on corner lots in the Village sub-area.
- The Plan supports integrating transportation and land use. Proposed design guidelines for the village enhance the pedestrian environment, and supports density in areas supported by transit. The long term plan is to see transit service increase as density increases. Bike lanes around corridors and shared streets on the ridge are also included.
- To promote local economic development the Plan supports village business with residential density and supports some new commercial zoning. It also supports using assets like the natural environment and agriculture to promote economic development. Saanich will explore economic development with local First Nations.
- Saanich endeavors to build relationships with the local First Nations (W̱SÁNEĆ, Songhees and Esquimalt Nations) and attended a community meeting hosted by the W̱SÁNEĆ First Nation. The previous Local Area Plan had no mention of Indigenous peoples and this one promotes awareness and educating the community about First Nations history, and information on their cultural resources.
- It is important that local First Nations feel welcome in this community where they once lived. It will be helpful to identify First Nation sites of significance, and include their language, support public art and businesses.
- Another goal is to reduce conflict to user groups on the Lochside Regional Trail and complete bike lanes along the corridor from Highway 17 to Royal Oak Drive.

Committee comments and staff responses to questions are noted:

- Question raised how residential density in Cordova Bay is calculated, and is there opportunity for more density?
 - The Village area plan shows land use designation, building types and proposed heights.
 - The Village area has been expanded. Transition areas outside the core support attached housing.
 - Neighbourhood areas have the highest infill proposed. There is a fair amount of opportunity to add residential density and support local businesses.
- Question raised if there is there any word on the new development across from the Beach House Restaurant and possible grocery store tenants in various buildings.
 - It is not known if tenants are secured for various businesses or who they will be.
 - Mattick's is under a separate Development Permit and is built out to the permit. If they want to redevelop they would need to go through a new DP process.

- This plan is great and has given consideration to other supportive plans (eg. Active Transportation Plan). Walkable communities include walking but all amenities are not within walking distance. Does staff think about different services that communities need and how to influence services. How can Saanich influence this?
 - The LAP supports future growth through identifying future land use. Saanich cannot control which businesses come. When looking at future land use designation, we are providing a suitable mix of land use to build a complete community.
 - Walkability is an important part of a complete community.
- Once land is designated for change, it may take a long time for land use changes to talk place, especially if housing is newer and not close to the end of building life cycle.

*** The Senior Planner left the meeting at 6:41 pm ***

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICER POSITION

A discussion occurred about what the job description duties for an Economic Development Officer (EDO) could look like and the types of tasks this person may perform. There are models of this job at other organizations that can be examined to help with this task. It was noted that some municipalities support business at the local level, while some try to attract outside companies to do business in the municipality, there will be many options available for the EDO to consider.

It was noted that EDO's around the province can have different approaches. The new EDO may choose to go through the province's western diversification program. Some will use the business's services as a hub point of contact, others will design an economic development strategy, some use investment attraction as a focus, while others may network more.

In reply to a question the Chair noted that Council endorsed the hiring of an EDO however there is no funding associated with them except for the FTE funding of the position. He sees the value in contracting out to help with creating a strategy but there needs to be budget approval for this.

Further Committee comments noted:

- If work is contracted out there will still need to be a capable person to manage the contract.
- They will have to focus on strategic policy initially and maybe even ongoing. At least in the beginning, to think about and bring right people together.
- They could provide input on current applications to the Planning department as this area is under-commented on.
- Committee should reach out to the Economic Development Association of Canada which is a professional association as a resource. Within the association we may be able to pull out best practices of what we want to see in role. We may be able to form a good foundation to look at including into a job description.
- In terms of other municipalities, Victoria has a similar position as well as a strategic real estate position. Sooke is going through the process of hiring and officer, and Central Saanich is discussing this as well.
- It may be worthwhile having speaker from the Economic Development Association of Canada to give key points.
- The intent and goal of the position is very important.

ZONED CAPACITY

The Chair referred to a September 12, 2016 article from Sightline Institute regarding zoned capacity and noted the idea of zoned capacity is an estimate of how much development could occur under the current zoning over time. Considerations and factors that affect this include financial feasibility, housing demand, forms of development, land owner willingness, etc. This is different than buildable capacity.

The Chair spoke about land in parts of the UCB and the focus on Centre and villages, and noted there can be very underbuilt sites. He noted that Saanich centre is very profitable, and that University heights is very auto centric, and development can be phased in. There is not enough housing in the market and parcels you want to see turn over are not turning over.

The Chair was not able to display information due to technical difficulties and noted this would be good for discussion at a future meeting where he can make a proper presentation. Committee members noted they would have to research this further to form an understanding between zoned capacity and building capacity and were not prepared to discuss this at this time.

This item will be further discussed at a future meeting when more members are present and the Chair is able to present further information.

VARIED RESIDENTIAL TAX RATES

The Chair referred to a report to Council dated May 20, 2021 regarding “Varied Residential Tax Rates”, which will be considered at the June 14, 2021 Special Council meeting. The Chair noted:

- This is an open tool that is worth having. Sometimes there are wide variations of values in different unit types and this places enormous tax burden on some. For example, some areas of low residential density are being subsidized by higher residential density.
- Varied residential tax rates could this be a tool to work between different areas of the municipality (eg Saanich east versus Saanich west) as there are big differences in assessed values, but the costs are the same to build roads in all areas of the municipality.
- Property taxes are one of five fiscal tools to reduce sprawl and create complete, compact and energy efficient communities.
- This recommendation is about looking at a variety of different housing forms across the municipality and be able to ask does the assessed value reflect the infrastructure costs and is this a fair method of taxation?
- In looking at a hypothetical sub-class of single detached, townhouses and multifamily, in some cases assessed value works fine and in other areas it does not.
- It is interesting to watch properties converge in value. In Langley their multi-family market is much cheaper than the detached SFD market. It makes sense for their mill rate to be lower for SFD.

In reply to committee a question the Chair noted the objective would be to have more equitable, precise, and accurate assignments in taxation. This is not to increase overall taxation.

*** D. Pascoe left the meeting at 7:15 p.m. ***

- Question raised: are smart growth, climate change and densification goals running against each other in terms of how taxation would work out?
 - The Chair noted this depends on the community. We wouldn't prescribe a mill rate or sub classes. Generally speaking they are aligned in terms of higher density projects. We could use the tool but how to use it is the question. This could be done on a case by case basis or we could create a variety of sub classes depending on needs.

Committee comments:

- You need to be careful how to define classes. There are suites in houses, there are home business, etc. which could affect classifications.
- There should be flexibility to tax different and member would be interested to see how this would be modeled out, considering different categories and implications.
- In terms of smart growth, if using taxes to influence housing choices, this may end up affecting housing choices for lower income and seniors as it is harder for them to absorb costs. There could be implications.

The Chair noted there are perverse subsidies in some areas. For sustainability, we share all services, but there's infrastructure in front of some houses and on some streets and not on others. This could bridge some of that inequity.

Committee members suggested this idea will not likely be well received but no objection was made to send this to UBCM. If it passes there, the way it gets actualized in Saanich would be a big conversation.

The Chair noted that Council will discuss this next Monday and this will not come back to committee.

DEVELOPMENT APPROVALS PROCESS REVIEW (DAPR)

The Chair referred to his report to Council dated May 14, 2021 regarding "DAPR Phase 4" which will be considered at the June 14, 2021 Special Council meeting. A brief discussion occurred and it was noted that this report notes the province should prioritize the findings of the DAPR report and implement them. Developments have become more complicated and it would be good to have legislation to support this.

In reply to a question, the Chair noted this is not just for larger scale developments, it is for anything that needs rezoning. Had there been a quorum tonight there would have ideally been a resolution from committee to ask the Mayor to write to the province to prioritize the implementation of the DAPR and to express that Saanich is interested in cooperating on the implementation phase as an active participant.

URBAN FORESTRY IN SAANICH – ADOPTING THE 3-30-300 RULE

This item was not discussed.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:31 p.m. The next meeting is Thursday, September 9, 2021.

Councillor de Vries, Chair

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

Committee Secretary