

**MINUTES**  
**PARKS, TRAILS AND RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
Held at Saanich Municipal Hall, Council Chambers  
**February 24, 2021 at 4:00 pm**

Present: Councillor Judy Brownoff (Chair), Ted Austin (via telephone), Kathleen Burton (4:25pm), Pamela Carroll, Pat Danforth, Annie Djiotsa (via telephone), Lyndsay Edgar (4:40pm via telephone), Dexter Owen

Staff: Eva Riccius, Senior Manager Parks, Gary Darrah, Manager of Park Planning and Development; Adriane Pollard, Manager of Environmental Services (via telephone); Tania Douglas, Senior Committee Clerk

Regrets: Leigh Campbell, Kyle Danielewicz, Amy-Jade Louie

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### Minutes

**MOVED by P. Carroll and Seconded by D. Owen: "That the Minutes of the Parks, Trails and Recreation Advisory Committee meeting held January 27, 2021, be adopted as circulated."**

**CARRIED**

### CHAIR'S REMARKS

The Chair stated that:

- In lieu of having BikeFest this year we are looking at holding a Saanich Geoquest event which will send residents to different areas of Saanich (eg. public art areas, trails, heritage houses, special ecosystem areas etc.). The participants would take a photo of the assigned number in the area and enter to win prizes based upon how many areas they visited.
- The food truck concept pilot project discussion will be going to Council in April.
- Park usage has increased significantly. For example, last June it was 79% over the baseline for BC.
- The Parks field guide was just launched.

The Chair asked committee members to send in ideas of special places that residents can visit during the Geoquest event. It is hoped that there will be about 20 areas to explore.

### RESILIENT SAANICH ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY FRAMEWORK

The Manager of Environmental Services presented information about Resilient Saanich and a new Technical Committee that was appointed by Council, and noted they are at the very beginning of the process to examine the environmental policy framework of existing, improved and new bylaws, policies, strategies, programs and procedures.

The following was noted:

- The technical committee (RSTC) is comprised of up to ten appointed experts and are supported by an appointed Council liaison, a clerk and staff liaisons as needed.
- Members of the technical committee are paid an honorarium as they are professionals who are expected to provide deliverables.
- Staff would like committee feedback on the vision, principles, goals and objectives and also how committee members would like to be involved in providing feedback.

The following committee comments and responses to comments are noted:

- Vision:
  - The vision is clear and well laid-out; the completion date of 2030 is ambitious.
  - Question raised whether the marine shoreline will be included in the vision as it is not showing to be in the scope.
  - Question raised whether “restoration” should be added to the vision.
- Proposed principles:
  - Committee members appreciate the respecting Indigenous knowledge and land uses principle.
  - Suggestion that principles #6 & #7 appear to conflict with each other. Staff described them to mean that as we go forward, we need to look behind as well; acknowledge and learn from the past as we move forward.
  - Principle #9 should start with “Continue to”.
  - More definition is needed for principle #10; (eg. working in partnership, diverse interests, achieve outcomes). What does this all mean?
- Proposed Goals:
  - Some members felt the goals are very broad and vague; what is the specific goal?
  - Some members felt the goals were good and need to be vague to encompass all. If goals are too specific then it becomes too challenging.
  - If they are aiming for measurable goals, these are not measurable.
- Proposed Objectives:
  - “Restoration” and “Biodiversity” could be added.
  - The objectives read like principles; how would objective #2 be measured.
  - The wording in #4 could imply that Saanich is not transparent.

Final comment made that the “next steps” page with the white font on a multi-coloured background is not readable. Font needs to be black.

The Manager of Environmental Services thanked committee members for their comments and noted she is happy to receive further feedback.

## **PARKS WASHROOM OPERATING AND CAPITAL PLAN FOR 2021**

The Senior Manager of Parks noted that a report recently went to Council regarding funding needed for 25 new washrooms. Council supports this and seven washrooms will be done this year. The following responses to questions are noted:

- Four washroom conversions were done last year; meaning washrooms that were for the sole use for clubs will now be available for all. Twelve conversions are to be done in total.
- A large request for proposals for prefab washrooms will be sent to Tender.
- Washrooms will need to meet accessibility design code.
- Permits are needed for some of the conversions in order to bring structures to code.
- There has been a significant increase in vandalism since the COVID. Vandalism events are built into the budget.
- The washrooms will be gender neutral and for use by all.
- There has been much higher usage of toilets. Some existing washrooms are on septic some use vaults/chambers, and some are attached to the sewer system.
- User groups have been in charge of maintenance for their designated washrooms in the past. Washrooms will be maintained by Saanich, and funds for this will be built into the budget.

## **OUTDOOR STRUCTURES IN PARKS (referral from Council)**

The Manager of Park Planning and Development provided information about this item that was referred from Council to this committee. The report dated September 25, 2020 from the Director of Parks, Recreation and Community Services to Council titled, “Outdoor Structures in Parks” was provided to committee members for information prior to discussion. The Chair

noted that there was a lot of debate about this issue at the Council meeting and she asked committee to consider whether a pilot project for outdoor structures in parks should be implemented at this time.

A discussion occurred and the following was noted:

- Placing outdoor structures in parks could be a magnet for people looking for shelter.
- Question raised about who would control, patrol and address issues that could arise.
- Question raised about an appropriate location to try a pilot and what would the structure look like. Suggestion made that Cadboro/Gyro park could be a good area as there is an existing picnic table area. Saanich does have large tents that could be anchored over a picnic area. This would be simple and the materials are already on hand.
- Suggestion made that a structure similar to one at Elk Lake may also be appropriate.
- Police have recommended that a structure should just have a roof only and no sides.
- Timing is an issue; it would be more appropriate to look at this in the future.
- It sounds like a good idea for the future but it would encourage people to meet.
- Shade is needed in some areas, and a suggestion was made that appropriate landscaping solutions such as planting of trees could help, rather than installing an outdoor structure that will encourage people to gather.
- A structure may result in graffiti, drinking, and garbage, along with congregation.
- A tent could be stolen or blown away by strong winds.
- There are positive and negative effects to having a pilot project at this time.

The Chair noted that the majority of committee members are not in support of a pilot and agreed that now is not the right time to look at installing outdoor structures in parks. It would be a more appropriate to consider this in the future when people may congregate again.

## **CAPITAL BUDGET OVERVIEW**

The Manager of Park Planning and Development noted the Parks capital budget will be presented to Council soon and he provided project descriptions and associated budgets.

The following was noted:

- There are 56 playgrounds and this year equipment will be replaced and/or installed at Allenby, and Normandy parks.
- One grass field at Lochside, Braefoot or Hampton park will be upgraded.
- Courts at Allenby and Sierra parks are scheduled for resurfacing. There are complaints about dogs in tennis courts and it was noted that a temporary Bylaw Officer is patrolling parks three days a week to check on COVID orders compliance. Signage about dogs will also be erected as they can cause damage to court surfaces.
- There are three major irrigation systems to replace and these will be phased over the next three years. A contingency fund is needed for these projects.
- Staff inspect bridges on an ongoing basis. Curtis Point will have some shoreline enhancements done to protect natural features and allow public to use the area with limited impacts. The Garry oaks are struggling in this area and impact from all users must be reduced. Staff may look at getting people down to the water more safely.
- Trail projects are completed based on a quadrant maintenance program. Every four years all 100+ km of trails are inspected and repaired as needed.
  - A discussion occurred about options other than gravel surfaces on trails in Panama Flats as accessibility can be impeded for trail users that rely on wheelchairs or scooters. Staff noted that this is a floodplain area and the new plan is to move the trail by about 30 metres to the east when they redo the loop system. Finer materials washes away and it is less expensive to renew gravel than to build a boardwalk knowing that there are longer term plans for trail relocation.
  - Comment made that hard packing gravel would be helpful for users.
- Parks renewal program will implement a few key actions in the Cedar Hill Park Management Plan (the plan anticipates implementing actions each year going forward). Horner and Tolmie parks were renewed recently.

- Streetscape renovation funds are used to build horticultural shrub and garden beds in various areas in the municipality. Saanich partners with community members on the maintenance and establishment of many of the displays.
  - It was noted that many of the Saanich gardeners create their own designs and a suggestion was made that small signage on each garden could be erected to let the public know this.
  - Committee expressed appreciation for both the pollinator and edible gardens that exist throughout the district.
- Natural areas restoration involve several staff and are planned in partnership with community volunteers and stewardship groups. Haro Woods is one big project in the plan this year along with planning work for restoration in Rithets Bog, Cedar Hill Park and some creek restoration.
- A major goal of Council is to increase the tree canopy and have no net canopy loss in both public and private areas of Saanich.
  - It was noted that a new external funding opportunity was just created to support this initiative.
- There are many buildings in Saanich that require maintenance. New washroom facilities will be installed in some locations. Playfair park washroom is on septic and will be tied into the sewer system.
- Mount Douglas Park has ongoing erosion and drainage issues to maintain; ongoing repairs are made to trails. A pedestrian bridge will be installed by the creek with a new trail to allow visitors to get close to the creek in a safe way. Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society are providing some funding for this project.

Responses to questions from committee were noted as follows:

- The parks capital budget is spread around geographically to ensure various quadrants are addressed.
- Fountains for water bottles (that have the motion detector capability) area very expensive. Some fountains have been ordered.
  - There are other styles of fountains that can be activated via a press from a knee or with a foot pedal.
  - Staff noted fountains are closed at the moment as they are not being cleaned.
- Parks is aiming to improve meeting youth needs.
- Staff will meet on site with a contractor for the George Tripp bike park and come back to this committee with the design.
- It was suggested that staff focus on trying to make trails as accessible as possible, specifically at Panama Flats.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 6:08 p.m. Next meeting is Wednesday, March 24, 2021.

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Councillor Brownoff, Chair

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

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Committee Secretary