

**MINUTES**  
**PARKS, TRAILS AND RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**Held at Saanich Municipal Hall, Council Chambers, and via Microsoft Teams**  
**May 26, 2021 at 4:00 pm**

Present: Councillor Judy Brownoff (Chair), Ted Austin (via MS Teams), Kathleen Burton, Pamela Carroll, Pat Danforth (via MS Teams), Lyndsay Edgar, Amy-Jade Louie (via MS Teams), Dexter Owen,

Staff: Eva Riccius, Senior Manager Parks, Rick Hatch, Assistant Supervisor, Natural Areas; Nadine Kawata, Community Planner (via MS Teams); Tania Douglas, Senior Committee Clerk

Regrets: Leigh Campbell, Annie Djiotsa, Kyle Danielewicz

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### **Minutes**

**MOVED by T. Austin and Seconded by K. Burton: “That the Minutes of the Parks, Trails and Recreation Advisory Committee meeting held April 28, 2021, be adopted as circulated.”**

**CARRIED**

### **CHAIR’S REMARKS**

The Chair stated that Council received the committee’s recommendations regarding dogs. The Mayor had already spoken to the UVic president about re-opening their field so the motion asking Council to write to UVic did not pass because of this. The other three motions made by this committee did pass, and the trial dog parks will be funded and hopefully set up through July and August.

The Chair noted that Council also passed a motion regarding food trucks in parks. The Senior Manager of Parks stated that we are looking to have food trucks in 3 parks, with each vendor operating for two weeks each (during July and August). The call for the food truck lottery system is open until May 31<sup>st</sup> and the application process is on the website. This program will be advertised and vendors will already have strong followings. There is also a street food app available for people to download. Don’t want to put paper advertisements in parks.

The Chair reported that the issues of signage at Gyro Park and creating an on-leash path to the beach also went to Council. The whole waterfront of Gyro Park and other waterfront parks are part of a 1923 sanctuary. There is no signage but this area is the Federal Government’s responsibility.

### **HOUSING STRATEGY TASK FORCE**

The Community Planner presented information on recommendations from the Housing Strategy Task Force (HSTF). The following was noted:

- Many recommendations from the HSTF arise from density issues. They examined complete communities, access to transit, and amenities including parks, trails and recreation (PTR).
- PTR amenities can result in positive impacts to health and well-being. Considering these factors, staff want to ask this committee:

- What are the impacts of housing and population growth on PTR.
- How can we ensure equitable access to PTR when addressing housing needs.
- How to protect and enhance PTR through the Housing Strategy.
- Housing Needs reports were recently legislated for all municipalities to undertake. Saanich worked with CRD and other municipalities on this and identified that key local needs include affordable housing, rental, seniors, disabilities, one person and lone parent households, and families.
- Following the Needs Report is the Housing Strategy, which will direct how we move forward and accommodate varying housing needs now and in the future.
- The Strategy will provide a 10-year framework and a path forward to improve housing.
- Many recommendations are about market and non-market housing.
- Council asked for an expedited process; this started in June 2020 and in July 2021 a final Strategy will go to Council. Much more work will need to be done to implement the actions.
- The Task Force had 13 meetings over six months to develop the strategies. Main recommendations have prioritized actions which were organized into seven focus areas.
- For this presentation we are broadly looking at housing impacts to PTR.

Committee discussed and asked questions of staff. The following comments were noted:

- There is a diverse range of actions recommended regarding renting.
- In the Shelbourne Plan there is a section regarding pocket parks to give residents greenspace. In the Strategic Plan there is a target for parks to be within 500 metres of homes. This probably cannot be done with the type of density being discussed but is worth talking about.
- Are there equity issues? Low income people should be able to access recreational opportunities.
- Some developers are looking at installing small dog parks in/near developments.
- Suggestion that housing planners be given the 3-30-300 recommendation to consider in terms of trees in urban areas.
- With all the proposed density the question was raised where parks will be located.
- Should there be density targets related to parks? Parks are very well used and are becoming priorities.
- Saanich has Development Cost Charges; can park amenities can come from these?
- Are developers able to incorporate greenspace in their own developments, (eg. roof gardens)? It would be interesting to see what can be done on site.
- Amenities such as a bbq roof, an exercise roof, a garden roof etc., could be proposed.
- This committee could recommend that with density there should be some extra effort put into green space and connections within high rise buildings. There needs to be some policy created in this big document to guide this.
- Small outdoor spaces for gardening is in high demand for planting vegetables. More people are interested in growing. Also, pocket parks, parks can get crowded quickly. We need areas with fields for balls, playgrounds, etc. Pocket parks won't be good for high density. Important to have your own yard as well for everyone: owners, renters, and lower income housing.
- We could use different layers from the GIS system and use different lenses for this issue and come up with algorithms or plans based on this information.
- It is valuable to ensure that information is easily available to owners/tenants on how to access and enjoy facilities. Suggestion that Saanich asks developers what process they will use to make sure their tenants and home owners know what is available in the area.
- The Chair noted that Saanich asks developers to provide information package to those moving in and they could be asked to include information about access to parks, bike facilities, transit etc.

- More cultural interpretation and signage would be beneficial and informative. This could come from DCCs.
- If there are playgrounds or rooftop gardens, they would not offer the same accessibility; parks are public so accessible areas need to be public.
- You want residents to connect with other residents in neighbourhoods.
- Suggestion made to protect rural areas from infill. The vast majority of people don't know the locations of trails and parks in rural areas.
- There will be growth impacts with neighbourhood infill if duplexes turn into 4-plexes, and with apartments.
- Equitable access: how can we incorporate fair access to PTR while addressing housing needs for affordable and diverse housing?
- Can we work with developers and have them provide recreation passes or transit passes for people; or provide bikes for people who don't have cars; any way to promote this would be beneficial.
- There are opportunities to protect and enhance PTR through the Housing Strategy.

The Senior Manager of Parks stated they will provide an overview of current standards for parks and assessments of neighbourhoods where there are deficiencies in greenspace, and noted that there is a need for good green space with population growth.

The Community Planner thanked committee members for the comments and noted in reply to some comments:

- There is a Community Amenity Contribution and inclusionary housing program initiated by Council and mentioned in the report.
- The Climate Plan has information on green space (eg. green roofs, gardens on roofs).
- There is a Tenant Assistance policy which is one of the parallel initiatives.
- Planners will continue to connect with other departments in terms of the Climate Plan and Park Plans.
- As census information is updated the Strategy will have to be updated as well.

## **NATUREHOOD MAP**

Kathleen Burton circulated "Nature in the City" maps for members and provided a background of the Naturehood group that launched in Greater Victoria. She noted that map's tagline is "a Guide to Many adventures" and this publication was made to deepen residents' connections to nature. The map allows for different experiences; it can be used as a guide and it tells stories of urban habitats and different species. The centre of map has an easy to see species references and the artwork is done by local artists. Community partners were noted as well.

A species list and places on the map show English with Latin names, as well as First Nations language of the ləkʷəŋən and the W̱SÁNEĆ peoples. This map offers readers a chance to learn about biodiversity, plants, and encourages one to get out in nature. Educational opportunities are showcased and this also teaches about watersheds.

It was noted that Nature is a free activity and there are apps such as E-bird and I-naturalist to help people get out and identify flora and fauna. About 7,000 maps were printed and there are only 700 maps left, so another print is planned. The next steps are to create an online version of the map.

The Chair thanked Ms. Burton for the presentation and noted that this map would be great at a tourism info booth.

## **NATURAL AREAS PROGRAM**

The Senior Manager Parks and the Assistant Supervisor, Natural Areas presented information about the Natural Areas program which is one of eight sections of the Parks department. The purpose of the presentation is to teach about natural areas, and provide information on how areas are managed:

- Saanich is located in the Coastal Douglas Fir zone, one of the most endangered ecosystems in BC, with only 1% of land protected and over 200 species at risk.
- There has been plenty of research on the physical health and mental health benefits of nature. Natural Intelligence is a Saanich initiative to improve knowledge of nature, parks and how to improve our environment.
- Natural areas are considered spaces that are relatively undisturbed, abundant with native species that provide habitat for a diversity of wildlife.
- Saanich has over 860 hectares of park land, approximately 500 hectares (62%) of which is considered to be natural areas.
- Private landowners play an important role in the conservation, restoration and protection of natural areas.
- A timeline of the history and growth of the Natural Areas program was discussed.
- The primary elements of the Natural Area Program includes invasive species management, restorations, trail work and restoration planting, community outreach and partnerships, natural area habitat structures and tree appreciation day.
- There are over 400 areas where invasive species are being managed by parks staff and environmental services staff. These areas will be included on a new GIS layer.
- Herbicide use has been reduced as most species are now manually removed.
- The Douglas Creek restoration included approximately 900m of the creek being restored, with dozens of restoration sites within riparian zone.
- The Colquitz Creek East Ridge restoration included nature benches, split rail barriers and a wood chip trail to a viewing area.
- Partnerships with Saanich Parks, Peninsula Streams and Public Works have led to significant improvements and restorations along areas of Colquitz Creek, Swan Creek and Bowker Creek.
- Trail work and restoration planting has taken place on Lindsay Trail along the Colquitz River, South Ridge Trail up Mount Douglas, Glendenning Trail and Playfair Park. This includes split rail fencing to protect some sensitive environmental areas.
- Between October 2020 and March 2021, over 30 sites were planted with over 600 trees and more than 4000 shrubs, ferns, forbs and grasses.
- Partnerships with volunteers, youth groups, first nations and non-profit organizations are important. These groups provide over 15,000 volunteer hours per year. Saanich provides pile pick up, onsite support, trees, tools and tarps to support these efforts.
- Many beneficial habitat structures such as logs/boulders, bat boxes, wood duck boxes, swallow/wren boxes and Great Horned Owl nesting platforms are provided in restoration areas and natural areas to benefit native plants and animals. One of the owl nesting platforms was in use within days, and video confirmed hatchlings within it.
- Saanich will continue working on the Natural Intelligence campaign, engaging and highlighting restoration opportunities to celebrate the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, trail closures and habitat protection as needed. Short term goals include micro restorations, drip line restorations, and pollinator plantings in parks.

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

- The owl boxes can be replicated fairly easily and staff are wanting to install more where owls live. Boxes need to be in a good spot in a mature Douglas; staff have to pick trees carefully and see what is going on around them. Crows do attack owls at Cuthbert Holmes and staff would like to put camera in the area to monitor the bird life.

- Sometimes cameras are stolen however plantings are usually not stolen.
- Wall lizards are invasive and spreading quickly. There is a local researcher mapping their spread. Deer can also be a problem and can eat newly planted materials.

### **DIVISION UPDATES**

Updates from the Community Services, Recreation and the Parks departments were received with the agenda for information.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 23, 2021.

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Councillor Brownoff, Chair

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

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Committee Secretary