

MINUTES
SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE ACTION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Held at Saanich Municipal Hall, Council Chambers and via MS Teams
770 Vernon Avenue
March 13, 2025 at 4:00 PM

ROLL CALL

In Attendance: Councillor Judy Brownoff (Chair), Lesley Bainbridge, Jane Cameron, Spencer Graham, George Klima, Leslie Miller-Brooks, Karin Nelson (via Teams) and Barb Sharpe (via Teams)

Regrets: Diya Courty-Stephens

Staff: Trevor Stubbings, Deputy Fire Chief; Rebecca Newlove, Manager of Sustainability; Erin Stockhill, Emergency Program Officer; Glenys Verhulst, Sustainability Specialist and Angela Hawkshaw, Committee Clerk;

ADOPTION OF MINUTES

February 13, 2025

MOVED by J. Cameron and Seconded by L. Miller-Brooks: "That the Minutes of the Sustainability and Climate Action Advisory Committee held February 13, 2025, be adopted as circulated."

CARRIED

RESULT: Carried 8 TO 0

IN FAVOUR: Klima, Miller-Brooks, Nelson, Brownoff, Bainbridge, Cameron, Graham, Sharpe

OPPOSED: None

COMMITTEE BUSINESS ITEMS

CHAIR'S REMARKS

- The CRD has completed the work on the Regional Transportation Service (RTS) to increase walking, cycling, and transit use, reduce carbon pollution, and tackle congestion. An Alternative Approval Process (AAP) will be conducted, with opposition forms due by 4:30 pm on May 16, 2025. Coordination with BC Transit is ongoing.
- Island View Beach Regional Park in Central Saanich focuses on conservation, recreation, and education, with initiatives like a new multi-use trail, improved accessibility, and interpretive programs.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND WILDFIRE PREVENTION – UPDATE

The Deputy Fire Chief and the Emergency Program Officer provided an update on Emergency Preparedness and Wildfire Prevention (PowerPoint on file). The following was noted in response to questions and during committee discussion:

- Efforts are underway to provide valuable information to all residents, including vulnerable populations.
- A program offering home visits demonstrating basic safety practices like water and gas shut-off and sheltering could be considered. Local businesses could be involved.
- A YouTube video could be created as a resource to inform residents about emergency preparedness, covering a range of topics.
- Water conservation is often overlooked, with limited awareness about its importance beyond drinking water. More guidance is needed, along with data and science, to address usage in daily

activities like flushing toilets and brushing teeth. An incentive to conserve water and reduce waste could be considered, particularly in light of rising costs.

- A specific emergency preparedness program for healthcare workers and emergency responders could be considered to ensure they have an effective response during emergencies.
- Wildfire risk is growing due to hotter and drier conditions connected with climate change. This is concerning to residents.
- Saanich works closely with BC Hydro to ensure access in limited areas is always available. Smaller emergency vehicles are available if required.
- Currently, three staff members in the Fire Prevention Division are trained as Local FireSmart Representatives (LFRs). Individuals can request a visit to any property in Saanich for an assessment based on FireSmart principles.
- Training is extensive in rural and wildfire suppression techniques, including alternate water source training.
- Applications for structures in designated areas follow rules ensuring non-combustible or low-combustion construction.
- The Fire Department received Superior Tanker Shuttle Service Accreditation from the Fire Underwriters Survey of B.C. in 2013 and was re-accredited in 2020.
- Mutual aid and automatic aid agreements with Central Saanich cover about 160 properties, helping with response times despite distance to fire hydrants.
- A concern was raised about residents removing trees to lower fire insurance costs, which poses a threat to the conservation of natural areas in the region.
- Home assessments could be conducted to certify fire safety.
- Cigarette smoking on trails in the summertime is a concern. Larger signage could help address this.
- The Coast Guard center in Victoria coordinates callouts to any available vessels during an emergency.
- • In general, deciduous trees are less likely to catch fire. FireSmart resources provide information on recommended varieties.
- Trimming trees and clearing leaves and foliage around neighborhoods and houses is important for fire safety.
- Requiring metal roofs could be a future incentive.
- Saanich uses a 100-foot tethered drone for surveillance and monitoring during emergency response.
- Rural areas in Saanich face a higher fire risk.
- Public education on wildfire safety is primarily promoted through social media and begins in the spring.
- Maintaining good air quality is essential for public health, especially during wildfire season when smoke can pose serious risks.
- The Climate Risk Assessment evaluates wildfire risk and its impact on vulnerable populations.
- Obtaining fire insurance after a wildfire event is challenging and raises concerns for the future.

The Deputy Chief, Emergency Program Officer and Sustainability Manager exited the meeting at 5:25 pm

NEIGHBOUR TO NEIGHBOUR (N2N) RESILLIENCE INITIATIVE

The Sustainability Specialist gave a presentation on the Neighbour to Neighbour (N2N) Resilience Initiative. The following was noted in response to questions and during committee discussion:

- As a pilot project, the effectiveness is still being evaluated. Applicants can apply for the grant up to twice.
- Requiring participants to attend a workshop before offering the grant as an optional opportunity proved beneficial, with one group successfully completing the process and receiving the grant. Two completed projects did not claim the full amount, while another claimed it and donated it towards a larger project.
- The N2N program worked in partnership with the Emergency Preparedness workshop, aiming to connect people to assist each other during emergencies. In multi-unit buildings, different units must apply together, while in neighborhoods of single-family detached homes, the group must be within a three-block radius to apply.
- More advertising could be done to promote this program.
- Connections with neighbors and within neighborhoods are key factors in ensuring safety.
- Welcome packages for new residents in Saanich could include information on transportation, climate action, and emergency preparedness.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion to adjourn J. Cameron the meeting adjourned at 5:56 p.m.

CHAIR

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

COMMITTEE CLERK