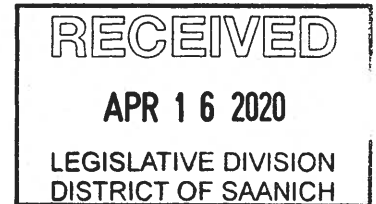




The Corporation of the District of Saanich

Report

To: Mayor and Councillors
From: Paul Thorkelsson, Chief Administrative Officer
Date: April 16, 2020
Subject: District of Saanich – Cancellation of Amalgamation Study



RECOMMENDATION

That, Saanich Council writes to the City of Victoria and the Province informing them that we are ceasing any further actions on the non-binding joint Citizens' Assembly with the City of Victoria until further notice;

That, the budget of \$250,000 originally set aside by Saanich for the Citizens Assembly will now be applied to address other financial issues within the Saanich budget in light of uncertainty under the COVID-19 pandemic situation; and

That, Council direct Staff to remove the Citizen's Assembly and consideration of Amalgamation with Victoria from the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan until further notice.

DISCUSSION

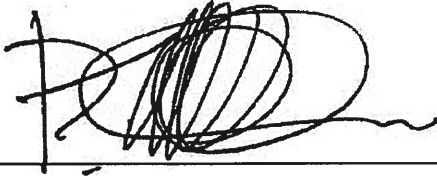
In 2018, the District of Saanich and the City of Victoria Councils asked electors if they wish to establish a Citizens' Assembly to explore the costs, benefits and disadvantages of amalgamation between the two municipalities. The question posed on the ballot of the General Local Election was non-binding and seeking community opinion.

The District of Saanich and City of Victoria have worked together for the past year in establishing a Terms of Reference for the Citizens' Assembly and would be in a position to issue a Request for Proposal to create a 75 member assembly with facilitator.

In response to COVID-19, the Mayor noted in the attached memorandum, that it would be impossible for establishment of a Citizens' Assembly due to the membership and internal and external supports required. The Mayor wishes to provide certainty to Saanich residents with the municipalities future without imposing stressors of participation of residents in an amalgamation study or assembly.

ALTERNATIVES

- 1. Council is requested to endorse the recommendations in the report.**
- 2. That Council provide alternative direction to staff.**
- 3. That Council receive the report for information.**

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Paul Thorkelsson
Chief Administrative Officer

Attachment



The Corporation of the District of Saanich

Memo

To: Saanich Council
From: Mayor Fred Haynes
Date: April 15, 2020
Subject: District of Saanich Halting Amalgamation Study

RECOMMENDATION

Given the emergency situation of the Covid-19 pandemic and its dire and continuing impacts on our residents, our ability to host large meetings, and its extensive disruptions to our economy and the municipalities' core operations, Saanich Council writes to the City of Victoria and the Province informing them that we are ceasing any further actions on the non-binding joint Citizens' Assembly with the City of Victoria until further notice. In addition, the budget of \$250,000 originally set aside by Saanich for the Citizens Assembly will now be applied to address financial issues within the 2020 Saanich budget.

PURPOSE

The global Covid-19 pandemic has changed the landscape in a dramatic way this past three months. There is uncertainty on how long the Provincial state of emergency will run. There is uncertainty on how long the recovery process will take. We know with certainty however that COVID-19 is causing serious impacts on the health and welfare of our residents and has unraveled the global economy.

The Provincial COVID-19 health advisories to our residents make it impossible for sizable groups of people to get together now and for the foreseeable future. The Citizens Assembly requires 75 community volunteers plus consultants to work together over a 6 month period. It further requires considerable support from Saanich staff for inputs with technical information. We do not know when a COVID vaccine will be available or when the health advisories will be lifted for large group meetings.

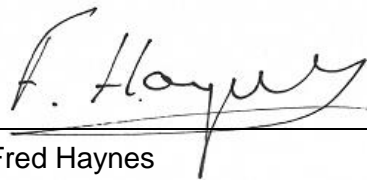
The economic impacts on Canada, British Columbia, Saanich and our region are immense. Businesses large and small are closing – some perhaps never to open again. Within Saanich and the region hotels, shops, services, eateries and more are closed. In addition to concerns about their personal health and job losses, people are struggling to

pay housing costs and support themselves and their families. Given this time of uncertainty it is incumbent on municipalities to use what levers they have to bring relief. Decisions coming out of the Citizens' Assembly - if amalgamation was the recommendation, would bring additional uncertainties possibly requiring a referendum on top of the uncertainty issues we are addressing with the Covid-19 pandemic and its recovery. Saanich staff have been asked to provide some additional details on non-budgeted operational impacts related to supporting the Citizens Assembly (attached). These further indicate that attempting to manage a successful Citizens Assembly process on top of managing our COVID recovery programs is not tenable.

CONCLUSION

Responsible civic leadership calls on us to take a hard and realistic look at the next 24 to 36 months. Given the issues summarized above, where the impacts on our citizens and municipality are great and the Citizens Assembly processes fraught with insurmountable challenges, this report recommends that we can no longer responsibly support this initiative at this time.

Prepared by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "F. Haynes", written over a horizontal line.

Fred Haynes

Mayor