

**MINUTES**  
**RESILIENT SAANICH TECHNICAL COMMITTEE**

Via Microsoft Teams  
October 18, 2023 at 6:32 p.m.

Present: Tory Stevens (Chair); Councillor Zac de Vries; Kevin Brown; Purnima Govindarajulu; Jeremy Gye; Chris Lowe; and Brian Wilkes;

Regrets: Tim Ennis and Stewart Guy

Staff: Eva Riccius, Senior Manager of Parks; Rebecca Newlove, Manager of Sustainability (7:00 p.m.); Thomas Munson, Senior Environmental Planner; and Megan MacDonald, Senior Committee Clerk

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**TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT & DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION STATEMENT**

Councillor Z. de Vries read the Territorial Acknowledgement and the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Statement.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**MOVED by B. Wilkes and Seconded by K. Brown: “That the Agenda for the October 18, 2023, Resilient Saanich Technical Committee meeting be approved.”**

**CARRIED**

**RECIPT OF CORRESPONDENCE**

One piece of correspondence was received. During committee discussion it was noted that the information, goals and recommendations are important and further discussion by the committee is needed on these topics. The correspondence has been forwarded to the consultant.

**DISCUSSION OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY EVALUATION TOOL**

The Chair gave an overview of the recent updates to the Environmental Policy Evaluation Tool and the following was noted:

- The revised evaluation tool was shared with the committee in September.
- Staff have advised that the eight-page document was too complicated to use.
- Given this feedback the working group was able to reduce the size of the document, however detail was lost in doing so.
- Additional details had allowed for consistency across departments. Loosing this level of detail is not ideal, however the updated format is simpler and easier to use.

The following was noted during committee discussion:

- There could be additional wording related to science-based information.
- Bioregional scale needs to consider other municipalities. Having specific and meaningful steps to consider the principle of a bioregional scale is important.
- Having both the shortened more recent document as well as the previous more wholesome document would be preferable.

- The Working Group has offered to set up a training session to help staff become more confident in using the document. Applying the filter to policies should not be a cumbersome ordeal, it should be quick and easy across the board.
- The goal is for staff to consider these principals and have these considerations brought into all policies and goals at an early stage.
- Testing this tool on a policy is the next step. It was proposed to run the draft Development Permit Guidelines through the filter during the November meeting.
- Council requested this as one of the deliverables through the Resilient Saanich process.

## **DISCUSSION OF GAP ANALYSIS**

Committee member K. Brown gave an overview of the recent updates to the Gap Analysis. The following was noted during discussion:

- The final version of this document could be included as an appendix on the Environmental Policy Framework (EPF) document.
- Identifying current gaps is an important part of improving environmental protection.
- The detail in the original draft version compiled by staff in 2020 was not digestible. A more fulsome discussion on analysis and categorization was needed.
- Linking the environment to policy, and what an assessment of adequacy means needed to be further described. Many of these concerns have now been addressed.
- Saanich policies and bylaws have been investigated; the tables have been updated to include more detail. The underlying details have been included in a meaningful way.
- Having this document as a standalone appendix to the EPF seems to be ideal.

The following was noted during committee discussion:

- The document lays the groundwork for prioritization of future actions.
- Aspects of categories where each policy may affect a component of a natural environment are included. This is important for understanding where policies may not offer sufficient environmental protection.
- Many threats and stressors are emerging. There may be issues elsewhere that could eventually affect Saanich that should be considered when creating local policy.
- Identifying the major areas that need policy protection is important.
- Having more references to the EPF strategic direction, goals, principles and thematic areas is essential in this document. Tying these two documents together will highlight the importance of the gap analysis and better support the EPF.
- It may be valuable to have an informal checklist to assess what aspects of the environment are affected or not adequately protected by each policy.
- Committee members discussed a Working Group which could review the document and provide feedback. This document will be reviewed, updated and included on a future agenda for the committee to discuss and make a decision on next steps.

## **DRAFT UPDATED DEVELOPMENT PERMIT AREA DESIGN GUIDELINES**

The Manager of Sustainability presented information on the update to the Development Permit Area Guidelines (PowerPoint on file) and made the following comments:

- The *Local Government Act* provides authority to designate DP Guidelines to establish form and character objectives and to designate areas of land as development permit areas (DPA) for certain purposes. DPAs must specify guidelines for how proposals in that area can address the special conditions or objectives of the DPA.

- DP Guidelines support staff in an efficient review of applications, as well as provide direction and guidance to applicants, review committees (e.g., Advisory Design Panel) and Council to support a common understanding of expectations.
- The guidelines should be educative, descriptive, consistent and clear on intent.
- The existing Saanich Development Permit Areas (DPA): Justification and Guidelines document is a patchwork of Development Permit Areas (DPAs) and guidelines that have not undergone a comprehensive review since before the Official Community Plan (OCP) was approved in 2008.
- Since that time there have been policies and plans approved by Council including the 2008 OCP and multiple planning documents that contain design guidelines, such as garden suites which have their own design guidelines.
- The purpose is to develop a simplified, consolidated Guidelines document that is aligned with the OCP and recent policies, plans and bylaws that have been approved by Council. This goal is a harmonized, easy to use document with clear language, explanatory visual illustrations, and alignment with other goals.
- The guidelines will be updated more frequently as new policies are approved.
- The new simplified and consolidated document will improve efficiency and aid staff in achieving targets as laid out in various plans.
- A descriptive (vs prescriptive) approach has been taken, with clear statements of design intent including strategies and best practices for implementation.
- More prescriptive guidance such as metrics have been added for built form, scale, orientation and relationship to public spaces. A more descriptive and educative approach was taken for character, composition, and site planning.

The following was noted during committee discussion:

- The document is clearly laid out and digestible, which is appreciated by members.
- The Garden Suite Design Guidelines include a clear definition of the difference between “shall” and “should”. This detail is greatly appreciated; however, it was noted that environmental aspects and bird friendly design suggestions are typically “should”.
- The guidelines are one planning tool, having a descriptive approach is complimented by bylaws and policies to ensure minimum standards are met while allowing flexibility.
- Many of the design guidelines are suggestions, such as materials.
- Policies and plans can engage the community, on many levels. The Design Guidelines work to achieve the goals of these plans without being overly prescriptive.
- This is a living document; as new plans and policies are approved, the guidelines will be reviewed and updated as necessary. Once the Urban Forest Strategy, Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and other important documents are finalized, the Design Guidelines can be updated to incorporate the information.
- Developers can use the guidelines to ensure that any proposals brought forward check as many boxes as possible to increase the support from Council and the community.
- Critical policy objectives can be supported by the guidelines in a meaningful way.

## **DISCUSSION OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY FRAMEWORK**

The Chair gave an overview of the updates to the Environmental Policy Framework (EPF). Members were invited to provide comments, the following was noted during committee discussion:

- Currently there are a number of items which need to be completed, including the draft glossary, environmental policy evaluation tool and the gap analysis.
- The framework needs to be completed by December.

- Once work on the EPF is completed and endorsed by the committee it will be forwarded to staff for information. The document will be added as an appendix to a staff report, which will then be considered by Council.
- Staff will have the choice to endorse the document as presented, endorse the document with suggestions for further refinement or to provide alternate direction.

### **RSTC SCHEDULE OF WORK FOR NOVEMBER-DECEMBER**

The Senior Manager of Parks gave an overview of the schedule of work for November and December (PowerPoint on file). The following was noted during discussion:

- The Provincial Government has recently passed the *Housing Supply Act*, which mandates housing targets for Saanich. This Act also enables the Province to take certain actions if targets are not achieved. Staff will review all Resilient Saanich documentation to ensure alignment with these targets.
- December will be the final meeting of the committee; all documents should be wrapped up and endorsed by the committee by the December meeting.
- Staff will continue work with the consultant to finalize documents and prepare the staff report for Council consideration.
- The committee expressed interest in having the complete BCS document promptly, however it was noted that the table is the priority interest to committee members.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion from J. Gye the meeting adjourned at 8:31 p.m.

### **NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting is scheduled for November 16, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.

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Tory Stevens, Chair

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

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Committee Secretary