

MINUTES
SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE ACTION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Saanich Municipal Hall, 770 Vernon Avenue and virtually via MS Teams
Wednesday, September 20, 2023 at 4:02 p.m.

Present: Chair Nathalie Chambers, Sarah Anderson, Jake Douglas, Jasmindra Jawanda (via Teams), Kurban Keshvani (via Teams); Leslie Miller-Brooks, Karin Nelson, and Mattias Spalteholz

Staff: Rebecca Newlove, Manager of Sustainability; Cassidy Daskalchuk, Agriculture and Food Security Planner; Glenys Verhulst, Sustainability Planner and Megan MacDonald, Senior Committee Clerk

TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT & DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION STATEMENT

The Chair read the Territorial Acknowledgement and the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Statement.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOVED by L. Miller-Brooks and Seconded by K. Keshvani: “That the Minutes of the Sustainability and Climate Action Advisory Committee meeting held June 21, 2023, be adopted as circulated.”

CARRIED

AGRICULTURE & FOOD SECURITY PLAN

The Agriculture and Food Security Planner presented on the Agriculture and Food Security Plan (PowerPoint on file). The following was noted:

- The Agriculture & Food Security Plan (AFSP) was endorsed by Council on September 17, 2018. The AFSP has 7 themes, which address overarching directions that can strengthen a sustainable food system, support agriculture and increase food security in the District. The seven themes are organized into actionable items, 45 of which are phased along with 52 ongoing actions to help to guide future decision-making.
- The Urban Containment Boundary (UCB) was created in the late 1960s to protect agricultural/rural lands from development by controlling residential growth and limiting urban sprawl. Approximately 52% of Saanich lies outside of the UCB.
- Urban agriculture contributes to food security and a sustainable food system. There are many options and different ways to practice urban agriculture.
- AFSP priorities consist of increasing opportunities for urban agriculture production and sales. Work is underway to achieve the goals and priorities outlined in the plan.
- There will be future opportunities to work with the committee on many of the priorities.
- A monitoring and evaluation strategy has been developed. It includes 22 measurable performance indicators that span all 7 themes to determine progress over time.
- As of this year, there were not substantial changes to the baseline values, however it is anticipated that as more initiatives from the AFSP are implemented, and as more time elapses for these changes to integrate into the community, there will be a more substantial change to baseline values.

The following was noted in response to questions and comments during committee discussion:

- The *Right to Farm Act* is Provincial legislation which gives farmers the ability to farm without adhering to some local bylaws, such as the *Tree Protection Bylaw*. The property must have farm status in order to exercise the rights provided by the Act.
- Use of pesticides in traditional monoculture farming is detrimental to ecosystem health.
- Concerns were raised about some farmland being used for industrial purposes, with more severe negative environmental impacts. Protection of farmland is imperative.
- Promotion of biodiversity on agricultural lands will protect keystone species.
- The goals of the AFSP are complimentary to other planning goals and targets. The development process includes information encouraging incorporating greenspaces and other green initiatives, such as green roofs and community growing spaces.
- Exploring creative ways to use underutilized spaces is important. This could include boulevard gardens or green roof options to help promote biodiversity and food security.
- Promotion of regenerative agriculture should be a priority in the AFSP.
- Increasing the percent of land which is being farmed today is important, this also means finding creative solutions to house temporary farm workers or those who lease land.
- Members expressed interest in finding a way to increase the percent of land that is farmed in Saanich, as well as supporting initiatives which increase food security.
- An example of the Islands Trust was given for Staff to consider when considering policies or procedures for temporary farm worker housing, as there are many options.
- Encouraging plant-based protein farming rather than animal-based farming could benefit other plans such as the Climate Plan as well as increasing food security.

LOW CARBON FOODS & CATERING

The Manager of Sustainability, the Sustainability Planner and Committee member K. Nelson presented information on Low Carbon Foods & Catering (PowerPoint on file) and made the following comments:

- Following discussion during the June meeting about the Plant Based Cities Movement, staff identified an opportunity to move forward with work related to implementing a low carbon food and catering guideline.
- The committee discussion and interest have highlighted the importance if this topic.
- There is a substantial difference between the green house gas emissions (GHG) created per calorie of animal protein versus that of plant-based proteins.
- Approximately 15-25% of global GHG's come from animal agriculture and feed.
- There are several guiding policies and plans within Saanich that relate to food procurement. These include:
 - o The 2012 Local Food Procurement Policy, which states that when practical 40% of purchases shall be local.
 - o The AFSP, which highlights increasing awareness, reviewing and updating policies, supporting local farmers and regional collaboration on food waste.
 - o The Climate Plan contains actions to model a low-carbon diet through leading by example, reducing waste and educating residents on benefits of low-carbon diets. There are action items to develop a Zero Waste Strategy and updating the sustainable food procurement guidelines.
 - o The upcoming Official Community Plan update will include moving towards One Planet Living and improved metrics to measure success towards this goal.
- The public may purchase food from private companies during a Saanich event or at a Saanich facility or bring their own food to Saanich facilities for events. Several private vendors are involved in the provision of food at Saanich facilities.
- Some District funds are used to purchase food for various meetings and events, currently a high percentage of which contain higher carbon ingredients.
- Staff play a role in local food procurement when purchasing personal food or beverages.

- Several sustainable practice initiatives are currently under way, including reaching out to local vegan vendors for events, low carbon catering and meatless snacks.
- Low carbon food choices are encouraged through climate communications.
- Staff will continue work on this initiative by reviewing best practices from other jurisdictions, piloting new approaches, educating staff about low carbon food choices.
- Staff will be piloting vegan-only food options at the next Earth Day event.
- A monitoring and evaluation plan will be developed and implemented; the committee will receive updates as appropriate.
- Progress on this initiative will also be included in the Climate Plan Report Card.

The following was noted in response to questions and comments from the committee:

- Being vegetarian denotes a diet choice, being vegan means living a lifestyle of abstaining, as much as possible and practical, from anything that requires the exploitation of another living being. This includes abstaining from consuming animal products, but also requires attention to clothes, makeup, and many other facets of life.
- It may be easier to encourage people to reduce meat consumption gently, making small gradual changes such as vegetarian options may be more favorable to the public.
- Greener by Default an organization which encourages leading with plant-based meals, while still allowing diners the choice to opt into meat or dairy.
- Focusing on the flavor and food experience of a dish or meal without labeling it as a vegan dish can avoid the negative connotation of the word.
- Communication and how to effectively promote plant-based options is a challenge.
- There is still a need for choice, a gradual process may be necessary to encourage consumers to be open to trying new meatless options.
- Staff will gather further information on possible policies and steps and report back.
- Education about reduction of high carbon protein sources is integral. The categorization of vegan food has limited the interest of many people. While becoming vegan is ideal, any reduction of high carbon protein is better than no change at all.
- Many people are concerned about monoculture growing of any crop. Education on regenerative farming and reducing monoculture farms would also be beneficial.
- Educating students and youth on the benefits of a vegetarian diet, as well as the climate implications of animal-based protein could lead to long term benefits.

*** The Manager of Sustainability exited the meeting at 5:35 p.m. ***

CLIMATE CHAMPIONS PROGRAMS

The Sustainability Planner presented on the Climate Plan, Climate Champions Programs and Climate Communications (PowerPoint on file), the following was noted:

- The Climate Plan requires aligned actions from the District, residents, households, organizations, businesses, institutions, and senior levels of government.
- Climate Plan communications play an important role in achieving the goals of the plan.
- There are many approaches and channels used to convey messaging.
- Staff want to ensure that time and resources are used in the most productive manner.
- Some actions relate to communications with residents (including a retrofit communications campaign), as well as broader initiatives to support individuals, neighborhoods, and organizations to take climate action and become more resilient.
- Successful community campaigns are challenging, including the community requires significant outreach. There have been many great staff reports and presentations at various events, however information is still not reaching the entire community.
- Saanich has many broad outreach channels, including media (newspaper/radio), social media, paid advertisements, pop up booths at events and Saanich owned channels such as the website, utility bill inserts, on-hold messages and other displays.

- Staff also use several in-depth channels such as self-study materials, industry engagement, school programs, hotline services, climate action groups, newsletters etc.
- Campaigns are strategically scheduled throughout the year to align with various factors, such as heat pump financing information during when the fall weather begins.
- Committee members were given the opportunity to review online documents from home at a later date, including the Climate Action Guidebook and the Carbon Calculator.
- Due to time constraints, there was not a discussion on these items, they will be discussed in more detail at the next committee meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion from J. Douglas the meeting adjourned at 6:05 p.m.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for October 18, 2023 at 4:00 p.m.

Nathalie Chambers, Chair

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

Committee Secretary