

**MINUTES**  
**SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE ACTION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
Held at Saanich Municipal Hall, Committee Room 2 and via MS Teams  
770 Vernon Avenue  
Tuesday, February 6, 2024 at 4:00 p.m.

Present: Councillor Nathalie Chambers (Chair), Timio Colistro, Diya Courty-Stephens, Kurban Keshvani, George Klima (4:09 p.m.), Leslie Miller-Brooks, Karin Nelson, and Mattias Spalteholz

Staff: Rebecca Newlove, Manager of Sustainability (4:09 p.m.); Maggie Baynham, Senior Sustainability Planner; Sharon Froud, Deputy Corporate Officer; and Megan MacDonald, Senior Committee Clerk

Regrets: Ronald Jeffries

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**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**MOVED by K. Keshvani and Seconded by K. Nelson: “That the Minutes of the Sustainability and Climate Action Advisory Committee meeting held November 22, 2023 be adopted as circulated.”**

**CARRIED**

**CHAIR’S REMARKS**

The Chair made the following comments:

- The effects of climate change are becoming more evident in many ways.
- Northern BC is currently in a state of drought, there is no snow and forests are dry.

\*\*\* The Manager of Sustainability and committee member G. Klima entered the meeting at 4:09 p.m. \*\*\*

**REVIEW OF TERMS OF REFERENCE AND MEETING DATES**

The Senior Committee Clerk gave a brief verbal overview of the Sustainability and Climate Action Advisory Committee Terms of Reference and 2024 meeting dates.

**MANDATORY ENERGY/CLIMATE BENCHMARKING FOR BUILDINGS**

The Senior Sustainability Planner gave a presentation (PowerPoint on file). The following was noted in response to questions and during committee discussion:

- Energy audit reports are generated from the energy signature of a building. Data compiled from an increase in natural gas usage during colder winter months can draw the conclusion that the building is heated using this fossil fuel and report on potential retrofits.
- Currently this program is run on a voluntary basis.
- The tool is being used in a few ways, including the Tax Exemption Program.
- A report with options on expanding the program will be considered by Council later in 2024.
- If the program is to become mandatory the first phase would target the largest buildings.
- Most green house gas emissions come from buildings in Saanich (including various heating, cooling, cooking and hot water heating methods). Targeting ways to reduce this impact is a supportable idea which will have measurable impacts on the Climate Plan.

- Commercial buildings and large strata buildings have more resources to implement the reporting. New mandatory reporting may have financial implications for those effected.
- The Province is currently providing a tool for residential owners. Information gathered from this initiative will also be used to recommend upgrades and incentives.
- Our program is used for reporting only, recommended upgrades are not mandatory.
- The Net Zero Step Code is being implemented in a phased approach, Saanich has taken a proactive approach that exceeds the Provincial requirements; however it is not possible to implement immediate restrictions on all new buildings.
- Solar and wind will be used more in the future.
- Staff are tracking and monitoring the number of natural gas connections in new builds.
- Preliminary discussions and engagement for benchmarking requirements are underway.
- A phased approach will likely be necessary with any potential changes.
- Ensuring the program is simple and compliant with the *Strata Property Act* and the *Housing Act* will be considerations as the program is developed.
- An analysis of the number of buildings over 20,000 square feet in Saanich indicated there are approximately 350-400 buildings which could be affected by the new requirements.
- Staff are currently analyzing how a lower square footage may impact the number of those who meet the criteria, as well as the data received from the first phase.

### **CLIMATE ACTION TAX EXEMPTION PROGRAM & FINANCING PROGRAM**

The Sustainability Specialist and the Manager of Sustainability gave a presentation on the Climate Action Tax Exemption and Financing Program (PowerPoint on file). The following was noted in response to questions and during committee discussion:

- Information about the Heat Pump Finance Program is available on Saanich.ca.
- Currently there is limited funding for the program so it is open to participants who are switching from fossil fuels such as oil to a heat pump.
- Home owners can apply, renters cannot sign up however they can encourage the owner to.
- Those who choose to defer their property tax are still eligible to apply. Payments for the program can also be deferred, however it may change the amount of the calculation.
- The Climate Tax Exemption Program is being directed at commercial buildings; institutional lands are not able to apply currently. This could be a future consideration.

### **ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION**

The committee had a round table discussion about areas of interest, the following was noted:

- Learning more about current Saanich Sustainability strategies and providing input on areas for improvement and how to better reach community members will be enjoyable.
- Clean technology is a growing sector, bringing ideas and information about new initiatives and possibly having them implemented will benefit the community.
- Understanding the effects of what we eat and the impacts on climate change are essential.
- Helping inform the public on better practices through green food procurement is an area where there is opportunity for the committee to make an impact.
- Reducing single use plastic and plastic use in general will have many benefits.
- Phasing out gas powered lawn equipment is a topic which could be explored.
- Saanich is dealing with local food security and housing issues. Members appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback on potential solutions through various plans and policies.
- A plan to help reduce food waste is of interest.
- Consideration of the creation of a solar shade bylaw to protect those who install solar panels on their home should be explored.

- Housing and development effects on the natural environment cannot be ignored.
- Protecting our fresh water is important. Devices to recycle water within homes are being developed, the installation of these devices in Saanich could benefit the environment.
- Growing food locally helps sequester carbon. Planting victory gardens with local Garry Oak leaf mulch helps support the ecosystem and address climate change.
- Programs showing residents how to grow gardens and local food would be beneficial.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion from K. Keshvani the meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

### **NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday February 27, 2024, at 4:00 p.m.

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Nathalie Chambers, Chair

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

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Megan MacDonald, Senior Committee Secretary