

MINUTES

SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE ACTION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Held at Saanich Municipal Hall, Committee Room 2 and via MS Teams

770 Vernon Avenue

Tuesday, February 27, 2024, at 4:00 p.m.

Present: Councillor Nathalie Chambers (Chair), Timio Colistro (via Teams), Diya Courty-Stephens, Ronald Jeffries, Kurban Keshvani, George Klima, Leslie Miller-Brooks, Karin Nelson, and Mattias Spalteholz

Staff: Rebecca Newlove, Manager of Sustainability (4:09 p.m.); Renee Cenerini, Environmental Education Coordinator; Megan MacDonald, Senior Committee Clerk; and Angela Hawkshaw, Committee Clerk

CHAIR'S REMARKS

The Chair made the following comments:

- The effects of climate change were clear during a recent trip to Costa Rica. An atmospheric river caused much rain and flooding, especially in jungle areas of logging clear cuts.
- Costa Rica has high pesticide use, in part due to encouragement from fruit producers to use Roundup and other pesticides which maximize monoculture fruit production.
- Costa Rica is biodiversity hot spot. Indigenous stewards who require land back for sustainable growing practices conflicts with profitable logging and farming, much like here.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOVED by K. Keshvani and Seconded by D. Courty-Stephens: "That the Minutes of the Sustainability and Climate Action Advisory Committee meeting held February 6, 2024, be adopted as circulated."

CARRIED

NATURESCAPE PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Environmental Education Coordinator gave a presentation (PowerPoint on file). The following was noted in response to questions and during committee discussion:

- The Land Conservancy offers grants for native seeds and local stewardship, a similar Saanich program would be helpful to promote biodiversity in the District.
- Staff are currently looking into grant options to establish a native biodiversity fund, which could be used to promote programs like Neighbour to Neighbour (N2N) and funding for native plants to distribute to the community.
- There could be benefits of hiring a landscaping partner who specializes in native plants and ecosystems to consult and improve on various Saanich capital projects.
- Biodiversity resources currently exist on the Capital Regional District (CRD) website.
- The Elk Lake and Beaver Lake Management Plan is one example of a joint initiative between Saanich and CRD.
- Rewilding areas by removing lawn grass and planting native species is extremely beneficial.
- Financial constraints can pose a problem for those who are interested in rewilding the lawn.
- The Province has provided signs for homeowners partaking in the Naturescape program.
- Rewilding and removal of grass can lead to judgement by neighbours who do not

- understand the process or benefits. Many people still view green grass and lawns as a prestige symbol, and letting the grass die or removing it may be cause for criticism.
- Currently Saanich Naturescape participants do not receive lawn signs. Many neighbours of those who are naturalizing their lawns are left wondering what is happening and why. There would be great benefit in having a Naturescape sign that could be erected, possibly with a QR code or a link to the website which gives details about the program and benefits.
 - Swan lake hosts an annual native plant sale, which typically sells out quickly due to demand.
 - Boulevard permits are an option for those who wish to take on Naturescape initiatives on the Saanich boulevard or road frontage of their homes.
 - Saanich also has a Boulevard Tree Program, where residents can request a boulevard tree be planted by Saanich in exchange for a commitment to help maintain it.
 - More signage about the Naturescape program would be a supportable initiative.
 - Regulations on reducing pesticides for lawns would also be a supportable idea.
 - There are a number of resources available from the Province and the CRD related to providing habitats, these tools can help residents be more biodiversity friendly.
 - Naturescaping the meridian lane dividers and having some areas be used as examples of Natrurscaping would be ideal. These areas could include signs, information and benefits.
 - We should be using as much municipal land to grow native species as possible.
 - People living in apartment buildings do not have the same access to space to grow food and plants. In these scenarios even a patio planter is better than nothing.

The Manager of Sustainability stated the following:

- One example of Saanich divisions coming together to reach common goals was upgrades to the Active Transportation network, where Sustainability provided funding early on during the design process. This funding allowed for a Landscape Architect to be hired, who provided reports on shade, permeability and drainage during the pre-construction and post-construction phases. This also allowed for thorough planning to ensure that Naturescaping principals were implemented. This is now an example of green infrastructure.

CLIMATE PLAN REPORT CARD

The Manager of Sustainability gave a presentation on the Climate Plan Report Card (PowerPoint on file). The following was noted in response to questions and during committee discussion:

- Having more transit options would help encourage ridership.
- A target has not yet been set for electrification of commercial vehicles; this metric will likely be included in the updated Climate Plan in the future.
- Creation and burning of biofuel can have negative impacts on the environment.
- The updated Climate Plan will likely have more information on hydrogen and the different colours of Hydrogen, there will be an emphasis on using Green Hydrogen.
- The updated Climate Plan will also refer to “natural gas” as “fossil gas” instead.
- Creation of a position for a climate adaptation staff would be ideal.
- The Climate Report outlines resource requests which are being put forward for consideration in the budget. Council will prioritize the needs of the District.

MOVED by L. Miller-Brooks and Seconded by R. Jefferies: "That the Sustainability and Climate Action Advisory Committee recommends that Council prioritize the funding for a Climate Adaptation Position in order to assist meeting the goals of the Climate Plan."

CARRIED

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

Due to time constraints this item did not take place.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion from M. Spalteholtz the meeting adjourned at 5:21 p.m.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday March 20, 2024, at 4:00 p.m.

Nathalie Chambers, Chair

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

Megan MacDonald, Senior Committee Secretary