

Economic Development Commission Meeting Jan 30, 2014

Greenglades Community Centre – 9:00 am

In attendance:

Commissioners Michael Hoebel (chair), Larry Peck (Saturna), Wendy Gardner (Pender)

Gary Holman (MLA Saanich North & the Islands)

David Howe (Director CRD SGI)

Sylvia Olsen (Alternate Director CRD SGI)

Melody Pender (Admin assistant to Director Howe)

Jeff Ward, John Hicks (CRD)

Pete Williams (School Trustee)

Tania Wegwitz & Chris Fudge (BC Transit)

Arnie Bell, Justin Stephenson, (Galiano Island)

Brian Crumblehulme, Ian Dow, Richard de Armand (Mayne Island)

Ron Hall, Peter Stolting, Paul Brent, Micheal Dunn (Saturna Island)

Derek Masselink, Lisa Baile, Peter Pare', Andrea Mills, Ina Timmer (Pender Island)

Regrets: Brian Dearden (Commissioner Mayne Island)

Welcome & introductions

Transit Presentation – Tania Wegwitz (see attached) Discussion followed.

Suggestion to have a centralized website for the gulf islands that would handle all transit options and info.

Gary Holman suggested that a transportation commission be formed that would cooperate with Salt Spring Island (SSI) transit. Electoral areas could be the funding mechanism. Perhaps since the EDC already exists transit could fall under that. Dave Howe said that there may be some funding available under CRD. How can we leverage existing relationships? ETGI? Harbours? Wendy Gardner asked why Galiano had more rides than Pender? Tania explained that land use drives transit so direct routes would be more cost effective than circuitous routes. Tania asked about the seasons and the suggestion was to lengthen the shoulder seasons somewhat. Another suggestion was the use of season passes. Paul Brent thanked Tania for the superb 'vision' she has given us.

Saturna Transportation:

Paul Brent said that Saturna does have a car stop program but due to small population and length of time between rides, it's not very effective. Their Lions Club is proposing to do a bus pilot project to see how effective it is. Saturna residents are very forward thinking and determined to have a transit system. It was reiterated again that we all need to think regionally in order to be effective. Derek Masselink wondered about partnering with others eg. Parks Canada. Parks has been approached about using the Parks bus in the off season but the idea was declined. Parks has mentioned that they will begin promoting B&B's on Saturna Island. Wendy Gardner wondered about replacing school bus with public transport or vice versa. Could the two be aligned? Pete Williams commented that it's a challenge to use

school buses for public transit due to labour relations – district versus non district staff. It's easier to have transit move school kids than to have school district move the public.

Pender Transportation:

Continuing on subject of transit Pete Williams suggested using the Pender school area as the hub to coincide with water taxi use. Derek Masselink wondered how transit has affected other small communities.

Mayne Transportation (report attached)

Brian Crumblehulme said that their transport cannot be sustained on their own so there is need to collaborate amongst the islands. Mayne has already committed \$42,000 to their bus program. They have volunteer drivers and realize there is an overwhelming need especially by seniors. BC Ferries has put the Mayne bus schedule on their ferries and also call into the Mayne dedicated bus line when there are many foot passengers.

John Hicks (CRD) said that they would wait to see the updated transit report which would then go to the Electoral Area Commission. It will go through a lengthy internal process which identifies the service area and focuses on the funding mechanism. It's important to integrate the SGI, to look at trails, docks, ferry service and to look at jurisdictional issues to try to bring it all together.

Dave Howe said that in his transportation discussions the 2200 jobs in Sidney came up and how to transport workers from other areas. This could have an economic impact on our islands if we can help them understand the benefits of moving to the islands versus places like Langford. This would only work if we had both land and water transport in place.

Tania closed the discussion by saying that she would update the report and circulate it.

Water Taxi Survey – (see attached)

Discussion followed. Paul Brent again said that we need to think as a region and that should reflect in the survey. Peter Pare outlined the presentation...costs, where it should be published (online, newspaper insert). Can we post it on our sustainableislands.ca website? The final results and analysis will be done by MAP. Michael Hoebel & Paul Brent suggested the survey be broader. Ian Dow suggested that Sidney be included in the equation... SSI, Sidney & SGI. Arnie Bell said the survey questions could be more specific. Pete Williams wondered if there is any existing ridership info. Justin Stephenson suggested adding a map to the survey. Richard de Armand said the survey should have more questions versus suggestions. Michael Hoebel commented that the survey results would be useful to marine operators and the public.

Salish Seabus – (see attached)

Peter Stolting spoke to the use of his seabus and the possibilities re scheduling and costs to operate. A seabus or other water taxi would need to be subsidized and Dave reminded us that funding depends on property taxes. Anything we fund means a raise in taxes.

EDC Business

Minutes of last meeting were adopted by Dave Howe and seconded by Larry Peck. All in favour.

Joint Response letter by Salt Spring and Southern Gulf Islands Economic Development Commissions to the Province re BC Ferries.

The letter was introduced by Michael Hoebel. Discussion followed. Wendy Gardner motioned to send the joint letter of response from SSIEDC and SGIEDC to the province on the understanding that it has been approved by both the SSIEDC and the SGIEDC. Dave Howe seconded. All in favour. Passed.

ETGI update – (see attached)

Discussion followed about the possibility of getting gas tax funding to begin initial trails projects. Each island identified a crucial & dangerous section which could coincide with the existing ETGI trail system. Jeff Ward (CRD) commented on the high costs of trails throughout the CRD. He will take a look at the SGI proposals keeping in mind that safety is number one and following the ETGI 'vision route' is also important. Geoff said that there is a 5 year capital plan in place with \$50,000 available for the ETGI project for seed money for planning. This is above the \$60,000 designated from gas tax funds for 2014. The proposed initial dangerous trails projects planning and development from each island would need to be in by mid-March for the committee to approve. There was a discussion about using local contractors for some of the work and Geoff reminded us that the CRD does have a procurement policy in place. If volunteers are also used there would need to be an agreement with CRD.

There was also discussion around trails crossing 1st Nation properties. Sylvia Olsen commented that most of the bands are not yet ready and that there would need to be long term discussions. However it would not be appropriate to move forward without 1st Nation contribution. For now, trails won't be shown going through 1st Nation properties but we need to make sure we involve them in upcoming discussions.

What are the timelines for the ETGI initiative? Reports need to be sent to Geoff Ward, then consultation with staff, the EDC would sponsor a trails meeting, then to SGI director for consideration. It would seem that 'dangerous trails' is the place to begin.

Initiative Updates

Agricultural – Michael Dunn has taken on the role of project leader. We need to collectively design an Ag Plan similar to what SSI has with the goal being to bring back local food growing. Work towards bringing together existing groups while maintaining individuality. Funding to come from CRD who will be involved with the contracting. Lisa Baile suggested that the interisland exchange of goods could help offset water taxi costs. Dave Howe said the money for the Ag plan has been allocated however he is not sure of the timeline. Will know more after his meeting in the morning. Derek has offered to help Michael as he has done Ag plans all over BC.

Broadband – Brian Crumblehulme said that there is nothing new to report just yet but there has lots of communication and meetings and that there may be some opportunities coming up.

Inventorying – This initiative is being led by Ken Hancock. Brent Peterson, who works for FortisBC and is doing his MBA at RRU, has conducted interviews and online surveys as part of this initiative. His goal for completion of his project is Feb/March.

Education – Dave Howe gave an update. Dave asked Larry Peck if he could be project leader but Larry said he could only work on this if he had a partner to work with. Each island will send the name of a candidate to Larry. Dave said he would help with this initiative.

Social Finance – Justin Stephenson informed us that he is involved as a Founding Director of the new Community Investment Fund of the Greater Victoria Social Planning Council. This will be set-up as a co-op structure for community investment funds to provide funding (at advantageous interest rates) for affordable housing and small businesses in Greater Victoria and the Gulf Islands. Some initial projects have already been identified in Victoria but SGI projects could also be included.

Dave Howe told us of the office space available in the CRD building for an innovation centre that could focus on social finance and 1st Nation issues. Dave also sat down with reps from Van City who told him they are setting up a \$100,000,000 housing fund. Could their first pilot project be in the SGI? They are interested in how to coordinate impact investing with the CRD.

Communications – there is no one source for information for the SGI – Wendy Gardner suggested that the umbrella could be the Trincomali Arts Council which has been in existence for 30 years and is already a regional organization. It could be a very effective vehicle to promote our region and can also access funding. They can apply for funding to hire an administrative person to help organize us into a more cohesive regional unit. Wendy also expressed concern about the sustainableislands.ca website. No one is sending in any updates and it is impossible to keep the site fresh. Basecamp didn't work as a communications tool either. Perhaps a communications plan is needed. Derek and Wendy will have a follow up conversation on this.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:35pm.