



Making a difference...together

**Notes of a Meeting of the East Sooke Citizens' Committee
Official Community Plan Review**

Held May 26, 2014 at East Sooke Fire Hall, 1397 Coppermine Road, East Sooke, BC

PRESENT: Blair Cusack, Zac Doeding, Neil Smith, Brian White, Stacey Scharf, Adele Tomlinson, Rhonda Underwood, Roger Beck, Jane Hutchins.
Staff: Tracy Olsen, OCP Review Facilitator; Iain Lawrence, Planner
ABSENT: Yale Shap, Linda Nehra
PUBLIC: Approximately 14

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 p.m.

1. Welcome

2. Acceptance of Agenda

Tonight is a continuation of the May 12th meeting beginning with Item #7 from the agenda.

3. Meeting Notes

The meeting notes from this meeting and the May 12th meeting will be prepared and distributed together.

4. Status of Action Items

Background data for the settlement theme has arrived and staff are working with the information. It will be made available in advance of the June 9th meeting.

5. Roundtable Discussion of Safe and Healthy Community

It is recognized by the Committee that wildfires pose a real risk to the community. In East Sooke, it is not an urban-interface situation as there is no hard line between subdivisions and the forest. The risk assessment is better described as an inter-mix situation since houses are dispersed throughout wooded areas on large residential lots. In some communities, homeowners are required to clear all vegetation within 30 metres of their houses to lessen the fire risk. For environmental reasons, this approach is not preferred in East Sooke. An alternative approach is to just clear the dead and dying trees within a 30 metre radius along with removing forest litter (duff). The CC discussed the ecological impact on the forest with this approach as the lack of debris leads to little regrowth. A CC member gave the example of provincial campgrounds where branches and twigs around campsites have long been collected for firewood and now this practice is discouraged.

Another CC member observed that convection currents on steep slopes lead to crown fires and faster moving fires. Some areas of East Sooke are more at risk from this type of fire. In the past, most woodland fires have been caught early and a Mars water bomber tackled one fire. In the past, there was a big fire in East Sooke Park and charred stumps are still visible.

Community fire breaks may not be effective in East Sooke. Because of the winds in the area, sparks can travelled up to 200 metres. Fire breaks do allow fire crews better access to the woodlands. The East Sooke Fire Department only has one engine and two tenders which are sufficient to fight one house fire providing the house is not fully engulfed. If a house fire reaches that stage, then the house is allowed to burn. For more than one fire, mutual aid agreements are relied upon. A CC member want to know if a system is in place to get a volunteers to help fight brush fires. Another member noted that the East Sooke Fire

Department and neighbouring fire departments have the equipment necessary to fight wildfires and have been effective when mobilized in the past.

The province does not have a mandate to fight fires in the regional parks. If there was a large fire in East Sooke Park and its' equipment was not otherwise deployed, the Province may lend its services as a way of gaining experience in fighting wildfires.

A CC member noted that sprinklering of houses was gaining popularity but government did not get behind this initiative and interest has wained.. Accidental sprinkler discharges have cost insurance companies more money in claims than wildfires, so homeowners are now being charged higher rates for sprinklered homes.

The tsunami risk is low in most of East Sooke other than in the vicinity of Roche Cove Bridge, Becher Bay and Tideview. Because of how steeply the land rises in East Sooke, most people can easily get to higher ground after an earthquake. It is common knowledge amongst the residents that after a large earthquake, as a precaution in the event of a tsunami, people should move to higher ground.

Support for emergency preparedness and table top planning exercises was expressed by the Committee members. These exercises have produced a community pod concept where groups of neighbours shelter together and keep their pantries full. Jeri Grant with Juan de Fuca Emergency Services provided some of the information in the discussion paper.

It was noted that in certain types of emergencies, the fire hall might be available as a shelter. The new firehall will be built to post-disaster standards and have a larger cistern.

In East Sooke, CC members noted that wells dry up during the summer with one 700 foot deep well drying up for the first time in 25 years. A CC member mentioned that rainwater collection systems are being accepted for new house construction. They may also be acceptable for the purposes of subdivision.

CC members commented that the Coppermine Reservoir is not large enough to meet current demands. On one occasion, fire-fighting activities depleted the reservoir. When the Coppermine subdivision was built, a fund was established to expand the Coppermine Reservoir but the status of that fund is uncertain. The water line to the new fire hall is expected to cost \$150,000 and is being paid for by Gas Tax revenue.

Providing it is affordable, one member asked if the Committee is receptive to seeing CRD water provided to areas outside the settlement containment area. Tracy added that the current RGS has policy statements limiting the provision of CRD water to areas outside urban containment boundaries but this policy may change in the Regional Sustainability Strategy currently underway. Members felt that the real limiting factor is the Coppermine Reservoir and if expanded, it might also create the need for better pumping facilities and possibly better piping. CC members wondered if it was possible to use gas tax money and the reserve fund to expand the reservoir and recommended having a policy to that effect.

One member stated that East Sooke is actually one big settlement area with two or three pockets of denser settlement and did not see why water could not go outside settlement containment area. The CC discussed the idea that the provision of water can increase the pressure for development. It was noted that both water and sewer would be needed before

development could occur in East Sooke, areas outside the settlement containment area already have CRD water (Mount Matheson) and the CRD is allowing trucks to fill up with CRD water for areas outside the settlement containment area.

In response to comments from a CC member, Tracy noted that the second paragraph under the heading of Well Water will be changed from: "including adequate *flows* for fire-fighting." to "including adequate *provisions* for fire-fighting" to reflect the wording of the Building Bylaw.

Committee members were not aware of any areas of poor quality soils for septic systems and noted that the improved standards for new systems include raised sand mounds.

When asked about cell phone coverage in East Sooke, members said that there are areas of poor coverage. They felt that it was unlikely that a request would be made to site a cell tower in this area as there are too many trees, too few users, too many hills, and local copper and iron deposits that affect reception. The other side of the Sooke Inlet is preferred. The CRD does not have a policy in place outlining a consultative process for cell tower requests. Tracy will confirm what type of power lines service East Sooke. Generally, ham radio operators are supported and it was noted there are already several in East Sooke.

A resident of East Sooke, felt that ham operators should be embraced and emergency preparedness planning strongly supported.

Katharian Gustavs, East Sooke, explained that Industry Canada's consultative process has some short-comings. It is important for a community to have a consultative policy in place so the cell phone provider does not dictate where the cell tower will be.

Jeri Grant, East Sooke, asked if the CC was aware that CRD water was being extended to service the Spirit Bay development in Becher Bay bringing the water line in close proximity to the eastern boundary of East Sooke.

Tim Marks, East Sooke, noted that there had been discussion about extending the CRD waterline from Metchosin/Becher Bay to the area below Mount Matheson.

6. Roundtable Discussion of Social Infrastructure Theme

A CC member asked that a discussion of seniors be added to the OCP as well as a mention of physical activities for youth.

It was recognized by the Committee that gathering places are part of a healthy community. There is a need for a place to hold youth activities and receive mobile health care services. The current fire hall is also viewed as the community hall. A member mentioned that, at a recent meeting, the East Sooke Fire Commission voted unanimously in favour of converting the current fire hall into a community hall recognizing there are capital costs, and wanted to know if this plan could be looked at in the OCP. Tracy said that the need for a gathering place could be discussed in the OCP but without knowing the broader wishes of the community it was difficult to have a specific policy regarding the existing fire hall. It is realized that there are problems and costs with retrofitting the fire hall for community use because all of the safety issues associated with the structure would have to be dealt with. In terms of food security, a member mentioned that the availability of water affects the type of crops which can be grown.

One member asked if there was information on what percentage of the ALR is farmed? Tracy said that a Land Use Inventory has not been done of East Sooke so this type of data is not available but we can provide information on how many properties have farm status including the number of farm properties outside ALR.

For non-ALR lands, a CC member noted that lot size matters when raising animals depending on the number and species and used the example of too many cows on a small lot. When asked how to address this type of problem, Tracy noted that some Zoning Bylaws incorporate a method for calculating the number of animal units based on species and then set a maximum number of animal units based on lot size. The member also noted that deer are a vector for disease and can damage crops. Other issues for food security and farming in East Sooke are habituated bears which will eat ripening food, and family dogs attacking livestock.

Appreciating the increasing popularity of raising your own food including chickens, CC members supported zoning which allows for chickens but not roosters or peacocks. Co housing and cooperatives are also gaining popularity as a way to make farming more affordable. A member noted that zoning allowing multiple housing units is very difficult to find. Building individual houses on one large property is also difficult to finance as the banks do not want to authorize mortgages for joint ownership in one property. They want one house per fee simple or bare land lot. Metchosin has the same problem and has been dealing with it by allowing mobile homes to be moved in for temporary workers.

During the review of heritage (Item 338), Tracy advised that Valerie Braunschweig is collecting information on the history of East Sooke with a view to producing a booklet similar to the one done for Otter Point. The CRD has offered to cover the cost of printing the booklet. A CC member mentioned there has been a recent newspaper article on schools in East Sooke and that the Stinking Fish Tour should be added under Arts & Culture. There was support by the CC members for Item 340 regarding heritage signage.

An absent Committee member provided the following written submission and gave permission for it to be read to the CC:

332 Goals for Community Services

- Support needs-based planning for community services that reflect population demographics, and health status indicators.
- Strengthen the relationship between the CRD and Island Health to improve access to services for residents of East Sooke.
- Increase the use of the determinants of health framework as a framework for community and infrastructure planning.

333 Objectives for Community Services

- To support and encourage the use of local data and the collection of additional information on the health and social needs of East Sooke residents.
- To encourage sustainable resource development that supports a healthy community.

334 Policies for Community Services

- Support the preservation of land for potential development as satellite office for Island Health, 1-2 day health clinic, volunteer services/centre, etc..
- Retain land for use as small scale supportive living residence or alternative housing for seniors.

- Ensure that planning for a healthy community be given “form” (eg aim for agefriendly status for East Sooke – that would mean lots of changes but almost all of them would also benefit young moms, people with mobility issues, etc.).
- Support zoning for services aimed at promoting the health and well-being of residents.

CC members discussed this material and were in favour of adding it to the draft OCP.

Although signage had not been identified as an issue, CC members were curious if it would be covered in the OCP. Iain Lawrence explained that there is a CRD sign bylaw in Bylaw No. 2040 and a Committee member pointed out that the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure will remove any sign from its' right of way that is too large.

A CC member felt that the term “support” regarding arts in culture in Item 342 was too vague and asked for clarification on its purpose. Tracy explained this type of policy is reflective of the community's values. In terms of land use, if someone came forward to built an arts and culture oriented facility, this type of policy would indicate support for it.

The need for Item 337B which states that subdivision of lands in the ALR for a relative is not supported was questioned by a CC member. Tracy pointed out that this is a policy from the existing OCP (Policy 4.2.4.2 (4)) as well as a policy of the CRD. In response to a question about how the Board votes, Iain advised that the full CRD board votes on ALR applications.

The CC member was also concerned that Item 337H regarding vegetative buffer policy was redundant because there is also DPA No. 6 for Farmland Protection. Tracy will investigate the ALC's opinion on removing this type of statement from the OCP. Concerns were also expressed by this CC member about the Farmland Protection DPA going through the homeplate (area where the house and non-agricultural outbuildings are) on smaller lots. In order to do anything on these small lots, owners would then have to apply for a development permit first, although to date, no development permits have been applied for.

Tracy said that it is difficult to look at site specific concerns regarding DPA No. 6 as this layer on the GIS may have shifted . Once the accuracy of the mapping has been verified, a closer look will be given to the location of DPA No. 6. Tracy noted that the Local Government Act only allows development permit areas for farmland protection to be designated on adjoining and reasonably adjacent properties, it can not be internal to the same lot that is being farmed. In a written submission, a CC member asked about ways to improve access to local food producers. Tracy suggested two ways are reduced lot lines in zoning bylaws for farm gate sales booths and supportive bylaws for signage. A CC member suggested identifying a possible area for a farmers' market to take place in East Sooke.

A Committee member advised that a new lifestyle and community website called “East Sooke Bridge” is currently being developed and may be of interest to the CC.

7. Next Meeting

Next meeting will be on June 9th and Committee members were asked to keep June 23rd free as there may also be a meeting on this date.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.