



File No. 0540-20

Sooke Community Centre Advisory Committee
Thursday, April 21, 2016 at 10:00 am
Location: Council Chambers
2225 Otter Point Road, Sooke, BC

NEW BUSINESS / SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

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SOOKE COMMUNITY CENTRE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

DRAFT REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS APRIL 2016

(To fully understand this document, it is recommended that one reads the *Getting it Done* report.)

In the November 2014 civic election , District of Sooke voters voted on the question

“Would you support the District of Sooke working with the community to develop multi-use community center facilities ? “ The vote was 82.9% in favour with a 41.5% voter turnout .

Based upon this vote , the District of Sooke on April 27, 2015 adopted a motion to create a Sooke Community Centre Advisory Committee and created the Committee’s Terms of Reference (TOR). The Committee was tasked with making recommendations “for the development of multi-use community center facilities for the District of Sooke area “ through 3 Phases and “to work with Council , staff and community groups and will undertake community engagement in all phases “ . The TOR presented a list of community groups and Committee of 15 voting members . The Committee’s term was for one year . The TOR are attached as Appendix A .

The Committee held 9 meetings (I’ve included the April one upcoming) which included a Facilitated Workshop on November 19,2015 to “map out” community needs and resources . Throughout individuals and community groups were encouraged to make written or verbal presentations and feed-back . In order to refine and focus the Committee’s community surveys and questions , four Working Groups were created : Arts Working Group , Youth Working Group , Seniors Working Group and Families Working Group . The Committee reviewed the SEAPARC Strategic Plan 2015 and was presented with information concerning the SEAPARC – SD62 Joint Use Agreement . The Committee received a number of reports from the Sooke Community Association concerning the current use , physical status and role of the Sooke Community Hall .

The Committee’s work revealed a number of important factors for further discussion and exploration

- Both CRD and STATSCAN data indicate that the Sooke area population will continue to grow over the next 10 years . Growth will be particularly evident in Seniors and households with children . About 12% of our population will be low income individuals . The CRD estimates are that 16.7% of our children are identified as poor . Those over 65 are healthier “seniors” when compared to prior generations and also wealthier with a 16% increase in disposable income when compared to a 1976 baseline . Whereas Youth , ages 19 to 29 have seen a 4% decline in disposable income since 1976 .
- Sooke actually has an incredible range of recreational , learning and sports programs in place offered by community groups and associations , private individuals , SEAPARC , EMCS , Sea Cadets , Brownies/Guides and Cubs/Scouts . We have a large talented Arts community and both Adult and Children’s Garden Clubs. We have Saturday and Thursday community markets , a vibrant Fall Fair and a renowned Fine Arts Festival

- We have baseball and soccer fields , the SEAPARC Leisure Center ,an underused theater at EMCS and 6 gymnasiums in our local schools .
- Our Seniors Center needs assistance in developing a “new home” . When they left the old Credit Union building attendance dropped from 300 to about 80 individuals . Such a “home” would need to be in a central location , have program and storage areas and be affordable .
- Our Arts Community is both large in numbers and diverse in artistic mediums . Like Seniors and other community groups , they also need that “home” that works for them : affordable , work area and secure storage .
- The Committee asked questions as to what factors serve as “barriers” for our Youth and Families and possible remedies . Some families have 2 working parents and others have limited incomes or transportation constraints. Would some of our parks and recreational areas be more attractive and alluring with washrooms , a covered area and picnic tables ?
- One theme clearly emerged concerning “community affordability “ .We are not a rich community and there is a limit to what taxpayers can afford and support . The larger “stakeholders” like the District of Sooke , SEAPARC and SD62 have budgetary limits and challenges . There is much to be gained by exploring new community partnerships and joint use agreements that can serve the multiple interests and needs of these organizations .
- The Sooke Community Hall built in 1935 by the then “young” Sooke Community Association has generously served our community for 80 years . Full replacement by either the District of Sooke or the Sooke Community Association may well be cost prohibitive and would require a full community debate as to “what to build ? “ . A more prudent and cost effective option might be developing a community initiative to assist the Sooke Community Association in the funding of a “renovation plan “.

General Findings:

1. Support What We Have!

Community Hall: The hall is already an important home for crucial community groups, but also has valuable space tied up with storage that could have better use for programming. The DOS should work with the SCA to do official design work on renovating and expanding the Community Hall and should look at purchase of land in the area to help with parking and expansion of community services in the area. The hall is a unique heritage building that should be preserved. To tear it down and build on the site would not add enough value that could not be placed on existing empty spaces or low value building. Regardless of what might happen on the recently purchased land, the Community Hall is still, and should remain, an important community resource that deserves the support of Council!

Seaparc: This is the only organization that has both the mandate and the ability to take on the operation a variety of new recreational programs. From a cost and logistical point of view, adding onto its existing facility makes sense, but they would also be the organization most capable of taking on the role of operating a new facility at the new land site.

SD62: There is a willingness from SD62 and the province to see multi-use development happen as part of new school building projects. SD62 and Seaparc have been developing new joint use agreements, this momentum should be strengthened with DOS working closely with both groups to make sure shared community facilities are included in any future development. One on the elephant in the room issue has been concerns over access to school properties and specifically issues surrounding staffing for events. Efforts should be made to bring together the user groups, facility owners and the unions to hammer out a community use understanding. Users need to accept that there are costs of operating that need to be taken into account. Having good working agreements will provide services and jobs for the community.s.

Kaltasin Work Yard: This site has significant potential for a facility that can serve some of the needs that do not require higher value central location land. Examples would be rehearsal space; workshop space for sets, museum artifacts; studio space; etc. This would be a Community Quonset concept.

Community Square: The concept of developing a community square should be a priority. The area around the Community Hall and the Legion could right now be developed into such a space. There would be a need for additional land for parking to truly make this site viable for this function over the long term. The new land or another site in the core and/or by the water also should be considered.

2. Innovate Towards the Future

The purchase of the new lands came late into our committees process. The committee applauds the direction the District has taken with the recent acquisition of 5 acres in the core downtown area, which offers huge potential to accomplish the Community Facility goals articulated in the 2016 Strategic Plan. It is expected that the municipality will be working with the Vancouver Island Regional Library (VIRL) to support the development of a new library facility, and it is anticipated that there will also be vacant space for further community use. This is a great opportunity to explore the development of community facilities to meet some needs for shared community space. In the Getting It Built document, September 2014, Sooke residents expressed their wishes for such a space: "...it should feel like the heart of the community. A place where there is something for everyone and people feel connected to each other and their town..." This new acquisition makes those wishes possible.

Specific Recommendations:

1. Sooke Community Hall

Recommendation: Council should financially support the development of plans to refurbish and/or add on the Community Hall. To start with, the DOS should immediately help underwrite the costs of the architectural plans for the redevelopment.

The objective would be to have a facility with better functioning programming and meeting space that both meets the need of existing users and makes the space viable for new users. Consideration should be given to relocating storage and functions that are not everyday activities and that would be better suited for less high value land.

2. Seniors Facility

Recommendation: Council support the development of an interim centre at Seapac through the acquisition of a portable from SD63 as an interim step.

Further that council should support the development of a permanent senior centre at one of the following locations: Ayre Manor; the New Lands; or at the Community Hall.

3. Youth Facility

Recommendation: Council support the development of a youth drop-in centre in one of the following manners: as part of the redevelopment of the Community Hall; the redevelopment of the Seaparc facilities; or the construction of a new multi-use facility at the new lands location.

4. Families

Recommendation: Encourage the development of low cost or no cost activities by continued upgrades of parks and similar facilities with activity shelters, washrooms, etc.

5. Arts Organizations

Recommendation: Council work with SD 62, SCA, SCAC and Seaparc to better facilitate the use of existing performance spaces.

Recommendation: Council support the recreational importance of the arts by the development of studio spaces at either Seaparc or as part of a new multi-use facility on the new lands. Further that council also consider the development of rehearsal, workshop spaces, storage, etc. as part the “Community Quonset”.

6. Community Quonset

Recommendation: Council support the development of a multi bay metal building on the Kaltasin work yard grounds. Community groups would be responsible for the outfitting and operating of a set number of bays for such activities as workshops, rehearsal space, etc.

7. The “New Lands”

With regard to a “new build” community centre facility, this committee recommends as follows:

A. That, along with supporting a new library, Council plan for multi-use community spaces for the residents of Sooke at the newly acquired Wadams Way location. Spaces may include inside areas for a variety of users and an outside “community square” gathering space.

B. That Council direct District staff to work with VIRL to develop plans that ensure best use of the newly acquired Wadams Way property to include ample space for added community facility use.

C. That Council direct District staff to support Phase 2 of this committee Terms of Reference that would “...begin a preliminary concept design for use in developing a

business case for the multi-use community centre...” to that would “...include options that could be phased as funding becomes available”.

D. That Council direct District staff to explore the feasibility of mixed housing development in conjunction with community centre use as a means to fund the development of a centre; and that Council direct District staff to engage with locally successful funded housing project leaders like M’akola Housing to seek funding and project planning support.

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