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Lions' Proposal for John Phillips Memorial Park Town Hall Event Scheduled for September 25, 2022

ANNOUNCEMENT

Sooke, BC

Thursday, August 11, 2022 – Residents are encouraged to save the date for September 25, 2022, when the Sooke Lions will host a town hall event to hear more from residents about the possibilities for a multi-use community amenity facility at John Phillips Memorial Park.

“The Sooke Lions are in service to our community and are looking to better understand what type of facility and related amenities could best meet the needs of Sooke,” said Sooke Lion, Danny Willis. “Our members will be on hand to answer resident questions and address concerns about the potential project.”

The District has not yet entered into a lease arrangement with the Sooke Lions, as we continue to listen to the community. Speaking to this Mayor Maja Tait shared, “We need to understand more about the proposal before we can make a decision.”

“How best to use John Phillips Memorial Park is certainly not a new conversation. For years we have heard from residents about optimizing the use of the space while also respecting the park ecology,” Tait continued. “We have a reputable community organization looking to establish a not-for-profit society to oversee the facility, including its construction and management, following existing zoning; it’s certainly something that warrants consideration.”

The event will take place at the Sooke Community Hall from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Sunday, September 25th, 2022, with a complementary information station in the park at the same time. In advance of the event, signage will be displayed in the park, along with markings to outline the park boundary and the potential footprint of a facility.

“On behalf of Council, we are grateful to the Lions for their tremendous service in Sooke and their interest to continue the conversation on a potential multi-use community facility at John Phillips Memorial Park so we can make the best decision possible for our growing community,” Tait added.

Questions or comments about the potential multi-use community facility can be made through the [Sooke Lions' website](#).

Backgrounder

John Phillips Memorial Park (JPMP), named for the groundskeeper who dedicated much of his time and talents to enhancing the space, is located at 2201 Otter Point Road, next to the District of Sooke Municipal Hall. This seven-hectare park features a pond, 1.52 kilometres of gravel walking trails, and Douglas fir, hemlock and cedar groves.

The Park was dedicated as parkland in 2005 when the 9-hole golf course that straddled Otter Point Road was rezoned - leaving the west side for residential development and the east side as parkland dedicated to the District. The property is zoned Public Recreation (P1) Parks and Open Space and is ideally located on trails connecting SEAPARC, Poirier Elementary and Journey Middle Schools.

JPMP is the second largest park within the District, second only to the Sooke River Nature Trail, and the largest in Sooke's Town Core. The Park area extends via the Stickleback Urban Trail to Ponds Corridor, offering offers an additional 2.5 acres of linear parkland, and the Seawalk Urban Trail to the Sooke Marine Boardwalk.

The District is considering leasing a portion of the park to the Sooke Lions for the development of a multi-use community facility. Should the project proceed, the Sooke Lions intend to form a not-for-profit society to oversee the construction, operation and maintenance of a facility within existing zoning.

The land is zoned Public Recreation (P1), which permits uses including:

Principal Uses	Accessory Uses
a) Agriculture	j) Accessory dwelling unit, one per lot *
b) Amusement facility – outdoor	k) Concession
c) Assembly use	l) Country market
d) Campground *	m) Office in nature centre
e) Ecosystem preservation	n) Parking lot
f) Institutional uses accessory to public parks	o) Temporary accommodation
g) Nature centre	
h) Playground	
i) Private club	

Additionally, should the project proceed, the District of Sooke would purchase the Sooke Lions' property at 2008 Murray Road, using the Park Reserve Fund to retain this lot as a park space in Sooke's Town Core.

Ecological Considerations of JPMP

JPMP provides habitat for hundreds of species of birds, amphibians and turtles and is a corridor for large mammals. The District of Sooke holds a water license for irrigation and storage on Nott Pond. The pond and streams that feed and outlet the pond are afforded protection under the Riparian Areas Protection Regulation and are the headwaters to Nott Brook that outlets into Sooke Bay between IR#2 and Sooke's wastewater treatment plant. Covenants are registered on title to protect the forest on the northern property line.

Engineering Context of JPMP

Two statutory rights of way exist on the property: one for sanitary sewer (that roughly align with the main trail system) and one for drainage infrastructure/streams on the north side of the property. The 100-year flood plain was extensively modelled in 2009 (see reference documents). The main trails

were constructed in 2013. The loop trails, picnic tables and benches were installed in 2017. The washroom, fountains and Stickleback Trail information kiosk were constructed in 2019-20. The District will be working with the developers of 2197 Otter Point Road to construct an asphalt parking lot with electrical vehicle charging stations between Municipal Hall and the commercial-residential development.

While a lease with the Sooke Lions is not yet signed, the District and Lions have agreed, should this project proceed, the District would purchase the Lions' lot at 2008 Murray Road from the Park Reserve Fund. Money held in the Park Land Reserve Fund, together with interest earned on it, must be used to acquire parkland.

In addition to purchasing parkland, the District acquires parkland from development contributions. In 2021, the District acquired an additional 6.5 acres of new parkland through such contributions.

Timeline

In August 2005, a Committee (John Phillips Memorial Park Trust Committee) was established with a mandate to develop and implement a process resulting in a recommendation for John Phillips Memorial Park.

The 15-month process received submissions requesting a wide range of amenities including buildings, recreation facilities, sports fields, special use areas, natural areas, and activity zones.

On November 10, 2006, the final report was approved by Council and included:

- A phased approach to the development of the park; and
- Within the phases, park enhancements may include:
 - Preservation/restoration of the wetlands and pond area
 - Establishing a meadow area
 - Development of accessible pathways
 - Boardwalks through sensitive areas
 - Lighting additions
 - Additional picnic areas – four picnic tables as of fall 2020
 - Picnic shelter
 - Permanent washroom structure – completed 2019
 - Expanded parking (to be adequate but only as extensive as required)
 - Open activity areas for non-structured recreation
 - Amenities and facilities provided by volunteer groups
 - Special plantings
 - Gazebo
 - Multi-purpose structure for functions, gathering, country market, etc.
 - Play area for families and children
 - Putting green

Other amenities considered for JPMP over the years, include a bike park, horseshoe pitch, dog park and disc golf. Apart from the disc golf, these community amenities have since been built elsewhere: the Sooke Bike Park opened at SEAPARC in March 2015, the horseshoe pitch opened in 2016 across from Fred Milne Park on Sooke River Road, and a fenced dog park opened in Pond's Park Corridor earlier this year.

In November 2014, The District posed the following referendum question to residents during the 2014 municipal election: *"Would you support the District of Sooke working with the community to develop multi-use community centre facilities?"*

The vote yielded 3,072 for and 631 against after 3,881 votes were cast.

In 2016, further community consultation on John Phillips Memorial Park occurred, yielding results consistent with the previous consultation in 2006 and the work of the John Phillips Memorial Park Trust Committee and prioritized a "community use area" (pictured similar to the Charter's Creek Interpretive Centre Facility) as one of the next projects for the space.

This history led to Council's decision to initiate an Alternative Approval Process (AAP) regarding the disposal of a portion of parkland through a long-term lease with the Sooke Lions.

The AAP provided an opportunity for residents to vote against the proposal and took place from August 12, 2020, to September 15, 2021. Approval of the electors was obtained with 1,026 valid

response forms representing 9.13% of the eligible voters voting against the proposal and allowing for the disposition of interest in parkland through a lease.