

Central Saanich Community Association

MINUTES

November 12, 2024

Central Saanich Lions Hall

Welcome – President Pieta VanDyke gave a territorial acknowledgement and welcomed everyone, outlining the mission of the CSCA and that all CS residents are welcome to speak.

Finance – Jackie Lee reported that we have \$295.93 in the bank. We are accepting membership applications for the 2025 year, at \$20 each (we had 4 new members signed up at this meeting!). We are starting a sponsorship drive, asking business to provide financial support to the Association. Jackie has sponsorship request forms that we can give to local businesses.

Aryze development proposal – Brian S., who would be a direct neighbour to the development, brought photos of the proposal and expressed his concerns about the required change to the Official Community Plan and the size and scope of the project. He and his wife are not opposed to housing for low income people and would welcome developments that fall within the OCP, for example townhouses. Brian had a handout listing 12 developments that are near complete or in the building stage, for a total of 816 units and 3 more proposed developments with 376 units, for a total of 1192 units. The District is well within the housing target of 588 units set by the province over 5 years and there is no pressure to modify our OCP to build these two buildings. Other Hovey neighbours spoke about the potential loss to their well established neighbourhood as well as the loss of mature trees and green space. It was noted that a representative of the Legion had indicated that it would be feasible to build on their current site. It was observed that the one storey cottages on that site are in poor condition and will need to be replaced in the next 2-3 years. President Pieta outlined the planning principles that are in the OCP, namely that buildings of greater height and density would be located in the village centres where there is walking distance to shops, services and transportation. The proposed site on Hovey road is beyond walking distance to shops and is surrounded by designated agricultural land. A number of people commented that the development is in the wrong place. One person said that Saanichton village has a number of underutilized buildings which would be more suitable sites for higher density buildings.

Civic Redevelopment/expropriation of Hovey road property – Dave L. described his concern when he learned about the expropriation. He asked District staff for a copy of the consultant's condition report, which outlines the condition of the civic buildings at 1903 Mt. Newton road, but was told that while a summary is available, the report is not public. Staff indicated that there is concern about a need for seismic upgrading and asbestos abatement. Once the purchase went through, he asked for it via a freedom of information request and received a copy of the 139 page report completely redacted (blacked out). In response to expressed concerns about things being done in secret, President Pieta outlined the legislated requirement under the Community Charter that says that any time a local government wants to discuss entering in to contracts, personnel matters, or purchase of property, it must be done "in camera", which means that Council members, staff and legal advisors may be in the room, but discussion is not open to the public. All those participating in the meeting must agree not to talk about the substance of the discussion. Essentially, the councillors are required to stay silent on it. Several speakers expressed the concern that no public consultation whatsoever was done in advance of any action on civic redevelopment. Most people felt this could and should have been done first without touching on in camera matters. Other comments included an observation that the historic Victoria city hall was not torn down for want of seismic upgrading, nor were the BC archives when asbestos abatement was done. Others commented on the risks and disruption of introducing fire and police traffic on Wallace drive, alongside sports fields and play areas. Someone mentioned that relocating staff during demolition and construction of their workplace is a common practice. The need to be fiscally prudent by building on the current town hall site was mentioned. Concerns were raised about earlier disclosure and transparency regarding the need for municipal hall replacement. Councillor Newton and Mayor Windsor emphasized that no decisions have been made by council for the current municipal hall site.

There is **no current undertaking** to sell 1903 Mt. Newton road. Mayor Windsor said that he is sorry that the discussion had to be done in camera. The District has a number of options when it comes to purchasing property, and expropriation is the option of last resort. He also provided some historical background. As far back as 2002 there has been discussion on replacing the town hall. It was built in 1965, with a police addition in 1970 and a fire hall addition in 1979. In 2012 a design charette (workshop) was held to look at options for re-locating the town hall on the current site. One of the downsides identified was that staff would need to be relocated during the construction period. He also noted that engineering reports were done by Omnicron in 2009 and in 2015. The reports are public, and the later one is on the District's website. The Mayor said that there was a long line of information that went into this proposal and they may need to reconsider how it is presented to the public. He will consider how to release information from the condition report. In response to questions the Mayor gave some information on the possible avenues for financing civic redevelopment including new borrowing and reallocation of the 400k per year fire hall annual financing cost once the Keating fire hall is paid off in 2025. He also mentioned the possibility of needing to either have a referendum or an alternative approval process to proceed with certain levels of borrowing. the Mayor would prefer to hold a referendum rather than to use the AAP process.

If you send a letter to Council, use this email address to ensure that it will be included with the agenda for the meeting when the issue is discussed. Be sure to address it to Mayor and Council and include your name and address. municipal.hall@csaanich.ca

Next meeting – Tuesday December 10 at 7:30 at the Central Saanich Lions Hall on E. Saanich Rd.