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TOWN OF SIDNEY

Report to Council

TO: Mayor and Council
FROM: Corey Newcomb, Senior Manager of Long Range Planning
DATE: August 11, 2020 Folder No. 6480-20
SUBJECT: OCP Review Collaboration with Peninsula Municipalities

PURPOSE:

To provide Council with some potential options for collaboration with the District of Central Saanich (DCS) and the District of North Saanich (DNS) during each municipality's respective Official Community Plan (OCP) review process.

BACKGROUND:

All three Saanich Peninsula municipalities will begin their OCP review projects in 2020. Sidney began its OCP review project in March 2020. This timeline is slightly ahead of both the DNS OCP review process, which began this month, and DCS process, which is anticipated to begin around September. Despite this difference in project start timelines, given the overlap there is an opportunity to collaborate with the two other peninsula municipalities during the respective OCP reviews on issues of mutual interest. Sidney and the DNS have also engaged the same consultant (Modus) for their respective projects; DCS has yet to select a consultant.

The *Local Government Act (LGA)*, which is the enabling legislation for OCP bylaws in BC, does not provide for any mechanism to undertake the development of an OCP jointly with another local government. In addition, the adoption, ongoing maintenance and amendment process for a "joint" municipal OCP document is, in staff's view, not practical given the current realities of the LGA and the municipal governance structure in BC. An OCP is essentially a land use strategy. Various geographic areas choose to incorporate in order to maintain a high degree of control over their own land use; this would be compromised by sharing an OCP with neighbouring jurisdictions, which often have differing philosophies on land use.

Instead, cross-jurisdictional cooperation and collaboration in land use planning in BC are mainly provided for under the regional district model, where a regional district covering a broader area (in Sidney's case, the Capital Regional District, or CRD) provides broad land use coordination services for all covered municipalities in a structured and legally-defined format – the Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) and Regional Context Statements embedded in each municipal OCP, which links it to the RGS. The CRD's most recent RGS was adopted in 2018 and Sidney played a significant role in the development of that document. However, any RGS has by its nature a broad, regional focus, and as a result, some relatively minor cross-jurisdictional issues that involve only two or three municipalities may not be appropriate to include in an RGS; these are the areas where staff feel there would be a benefit to working closely with the DNS and DCS to improve the three municipalities' respective OCP policies. While collaboration on more local issues like this are in fact ongoing, there may be an opportunity to formalize certain issues within respective OCP documents.

This report discusses some potential areas for collaboration between the three municipalities and provides a recommendation for coordinating planning work in these areas with DNS and DCS.

DISCUSSION:

Planning staff from each municipality have been meeting regularly since May 2020 to discuss the respective OCP review processes in detail. More recently, discussions have focused on potential areas of collaboration as each project progresses. Staff from all three municipalities have identified the following areas of potential collaboration:

- Consultation with School District 63

The three peninsula municipalities are covered entirely by School District 63 (SD63) and there exists a significant amount of inter-municipal travel and transfers between schools on the peninsula. Moreover, SD63 undertakes their facility and population planning processes based on their geographical area (covering the entire Saanich Peninsula) and so approaching school district consultation (which is specifically required by the LGA) on a peninsula-wide basis makes sense. Staff suggest as a starting point a joint letter from all three peninsula municipalities to reach out to SD63 and propose consultation on a joint basis.

- Consultation with the Peninsula Recreation Commission

The Commission is planning to undertake a refreshed strategic plan over the next several months, which coincides well with the OCP review processes of the three peninsula municipalities. Sidney staff have met with Commission staff and they have indicated that their preference would be to undertake joint consultation, as the Commission has a strong cross-jurisdictional focus. Similar to SD63, staff propose a joint letter from all three municipalities to begin this consultation process, with meetings to follow.

- Local Area Assessments (with DNS only)

Local Area Assessments would involve a close look at land uses in areas which are bisected by the municipal boundary between Sidney and the DNS. The intent of this review would be to ensure that residents and businesses in these border fringe areas receive a comprehensive look at the services, transportation facilities and amenities (e.g. parks, transit, recreation opportunities, etc.) in these neighbourhoods and ensure that they are planned with “complete community” principles in mind. This process will benefit from the fact that both Sidney and the DNS have retained Modus as the principal consultant on both projects. Coordination in this area has already begun with Sidney, the DNS and the Victoria Airport jointly undertaking the Beacon Avenue West Traffic Impact Study, to ensure a coordinated approach to transportation in that area. While opinions may ultimately differ on the appropriate level of service provision among the municipalities, assessing the current land use situation would be useful in providing a basis for discussion on issues of mutual interest in these areas.

- Environmental Considerations

A significant issue which crosses municipal boundaries is environmental considerations, including climate change. While the development of individual property-level policies to strengthen protections for the natural environment will remain a Sidney-specific process, a joint approach can be taken to addressing environmental considerations at the sub-regional level. While the RGS does address environmental issues on a regional basis, there is an opportunity to address issues which primarily affect cross-jurisdictional areas at the sub-regional level on the peninsula. An example of this is a coordinated policy approach to the Tsehum Harbour Bird Sanctuary, which Sidney and North Saanich share. The recently formed Saanich Peninsula Environmental Coalition (SPEC) is also working on the development of a “Bioregional Framework” for the Saanich Peninsula, and staff from all three municipalities have been engaging with SPEC over the summer to further develop this idea and how it might contribute to each municipal OCP process.

- Transportation on the Peninsula

Transportation is another issue which crosses jurisdictional boundaries and would benefit from collaboration. All three municipalities are working to improve active transportation facilities, public transit provision and connectivity across the peninsula and a coordinated approach to this work including joint meetings or workshops could be beneficial. This work would include not only coordination with DCS and DNS, but also other stakeholders such as CRD Parks (which manages the Lochside trail), BC Transit and the Victoria Airport Authority. BC Transit is planning for a Saanich Peninsula local area transit plan beginning in 2021, so a joint approach to future transportation planning initiatives is timely.

- Emergency Response

Although a significant relationship between emergency services for the Saanich Peninsula already exists, staff would consult with these organizations and if feasible include opportunities for a joint meeting and potential future emergency planning initiatives in each respective OCP.

Staff note that the above are intended to be areas of specific discussion on these topics with DNS and DCS. Other items of mutual concern will of course be discussed at the staff level as they arise, and if deemed significant would be elevated for Council's specific consideration at the appropriate time. Once ready, Sidney's draft OCP document will also be formally referred to both municipalities for comments, providing a final opportunity for discussion and review of common issues by each Council prior to the final adoption of Sidney's OCP.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS:

At this time, no additional budget implications for the above work are expected. Some initiatives, such as the Beacon Avenue West Traffic Impact Study, are already funded. Other work would primarily involve staff level discussions which would be expected to take place at the appropriate stage during the OCP review process. Any specific project proposals which develop out of the discussions would be brought forward to Council for consideration at a later date.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

That a letter be sent to the District of North Saanich and the District of Central Saanich requesting inter-municipal cooperation during our respective OCP review processes in the areas identified in the staff report dated August 11, 2020 as well as consideration for undertaking a tri-municipal approach for consultation with School District 63 and the Peninsula Recreation Commission.

Respectfully submitted,

I concur,


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Planning


for Randy Humble,
Chief Administrative Officer