

AGENDA

Regional District of Nanaimo
Electoral Area 'A' Official Community Plan Review Citizen's Committee

Monday February 9, 2009 @ 6:30 pm
(North Cedar Improvement District Fire Hall - 2100 Yellow Point Road)

1. **Minutes**
Adoption of the minutes from the meeting of January 12, 2009 – page 2
2. **Workshop Results**
Discussion
3. **Rural Integrity and Rural Character**
What are they, why are they important, and how should we protect them?
General discussion – page 4
4. **Other**
Need for detailed discussions: role of village centres, urban containment, transit, groundwater protection, minimum parcel sizes in rural areas, parks and recreation, affordable housing, industrial use, supporting agriculture, and urban containment.

**Summary of the Electoral Area 'A' Official Community Plan Review
Citizen's Committee Meeting Held on Monday, January 12, 2009 @ 6:30pm
At the North Cedar Improvement District Hall
2100 Yellow Point Road**

Meeting called to order at 7:00 pm. There were approximately 18 people in attendance including guests.

The Chair, Director Burnett, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Agenda Item No. 1 – Minutes of the December 1, 2008 Meeting

The minutes of the Electoral Area 'A' Official Community Plan review Citizen's Committee meeting of December 1, 2008 were moved by Lynn Clark and seconded by Brian Collin and were approved without amendments.

Agenda Item No. 2 – Draft Community Vision

Greg Keller, gave a brief update on the status of the draft Community Vision. The Committee then discussed the draft vision one paragraph at a time. There was discussion related to each paragraph, which in some cases, resulted in amendments to the Community Vision. The Committee took a vote after reviewing each paragraph to ensure that it agreed with it and before moving on to the next paragraph.

The Committee approved the following Community Vision:

A Shared Community Vision

Electoral Area 'A' is a diverse caring community full of local talent, which respects its cultural and historical roots in agriculture, mining, forestry, and other resource uses. Electoral Area A residents include members of the Snuneymuxw and Chemainus First Nations.

Electoral Area 'A' is also a community with a strong emphasis on the preservation of its existing rural values, which are deeply entrenched in the community and passed down through generations. Rural village feel, lands in agricultural and resource production, quietness, open spaces, opportunities to interact and be in touch with and appreciate nature, and clean air and water are some of the values which contribute towards area residents' way of life and is the reason we call Electoral Area 'A' home.

On December 6, 2008, the community came together to develop 'A Shared Community Vision'. This Vision recognizes that environmental, social, or economic changes may be needed to ensure that the things the community values today are preserved and enhanced for future generations. It also ensures that the community continues to work toward sustainability in consideration of the potential global impacts of climate change.

The community vision is:

It is 2033, and Electoral Area 'A' is a highly desirable place to live, work, and play and as a result has become more socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable. The community has evolved over time through careful planning and guidance provided by the Official Community Plan, which has been upheld by the Regional District of Nanaimo and strongly supported by members of the community. The Official Community Plan is based on the concept of sustainability and 'smart growth, which seeks to minimize the impacts of human activities. This has been accomplished by managing natural resources, as well as economic environmental, and social systems in a way that enhances quality of life, yet does not diminish the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

Electoral Area 'A' has become a leader in local food production and sustainability and is often showcased as a model community due to its environmental stewardship and protection policies, growth management strategies, innovative use of alternative technologies, green building programs , recreational and sports opportunities, diverse culture, artistic talent, and excellent multi-modal transportation system.

After nearly 25 years of well managed development, rural values are not only maintained and protected but are also enhanced. Young families and seniors are now attracted to and are staying within the community. There are opportunities for local employment, which contribute to the local economy and have minimal impacts on the environment. Per capita green house gas emissions have been reduced and continue to decline as the economy prospers.

Growth is directed into well-defined village and neighbourhood centres. Growth and development outside these centres has largely been avoided as agriculture, resource use, and conservation of biodiversity have become the top priority for these areas.

The community is a vibrant place to live where a diversity of residents from all economic levels and ethnic backgrounds are welcomed and have an enhanced sense of community pride. Electoral Area 'A' residents feel safe in their community and enjoy the personal freedom a rural lifestyle provides.

Agenda Item No. 3 – Community Planning 101

Greg Keller, gave a 25 minute presentation on some of the basics of community planning including, what is a Regional Growth Strategy, what is the Official Community Plan, what is Zoning, what is a Development Permit Area, how the development process works, the Official Community Plan adoption process, etc.

During the presentation there was some questions and discussion.

Agenda Item No. 4 – Next Steps

Greg Keller, introduced the topic of Community Workshops for the Electoral Area 'A' Official Community Plan review. Mr. Keller asked the Committee if having workshops on Saturdays was desirable. Mr. Keller suggested that there could be 4 half-day workshops held over two full Saturdays. The Committee agreed with the suggestion.

The meeting was closed at approximately 9:30 pm.

Certified correct by:

Director Joe Burnett, Committee Chairperson

A Discussion on Rural Integrity and Rural Character What are they, why are they important, and what should we do to maintain them?

It is clear that Electoral Area 'A' residents value their rural lifestyle. The current Official Community Plan places a strong emphasis on preserving rural values and maintaining a landscape of forests and fields. The Official Community Plan states that the community's highest priority is the protection of Electoral Area 'A's rural atmosphere and character.

A Shared Community Vision also stresses that it is important to maintain and enhance the rural values of Electoral Area 'A' some of which include rural village feel, lands in agricultural and resource production, quietness, open spaces, opportunities to interact and be in touch with and appreciate nature, and clean air and water.

In order to achieve this vision, 'A Shared Community Vision' seeks to direct growth into well-defined village and neighbourhood centres and avoid growth and development outside these centres so that agriculture, resource use, and conservation of biodiversity can become the top priority for these areas. The Community Vision also provides that Electoral Area 'A' will become a leader in local food production.

Throughout the Electoral Area 'A' Official Community Plan review process, the community has consistently confirmed their desire to protect rural areas from additional residential development to maintain the rural character and integrity of Area A. The Community has also consistently told us that there is a need to limit growth and residential development within rural areas and direct growth into well defined Urban Containment Boundary's.

But what are Rural Character and Rural Integrity, why are they important to the Community, and what should we do to protect them? These may be some of the toughest questions that the community must consider during the Official Community Plan review.

It is critical that we make a distinction between Rural Character, the aesthetics of the rural landscape, and a functioning rural landscape (Rural Integrity), which may for example be land under cultivation or natural areas preserved for their biological diversity. Aesthetically pleasing landscapes may help us define the term 'Rural Character', but do not necessarily help us achieve 'A Shared Community Vision'.

In addition to supporting agriculture and resource use, the other major thrust towards reducing the amount of residential development in the rural areas is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In our Region, transportation is the leading source of greenhouse gas emissions (63%). The Regional District of Nanaimo exceeds the provincial average in the number of residents who drive to work, although we are on par with other Regional Districts in the Province. Employed residents are increasingly reliant on vehicles as their primary mode of transportation to and from work, despite living closer to work than those in other regions¹.

The best and perhaps most practical tool the community has to reverse this trend is to make changes to the land use pattern in the rural area and focus development into well-defined village centres where residents can be closer to employment, services, mobility options, education, etc.

Any greenhouse gas reductions and other efficiencies gained by introducing green technologies, materials, and techniques into developments located in rural areas well removed from urban amenities are offset by the fact that residents in these areas must drive long distances to town for all their basic necessities and employment. This additional driving accounts for significant greenhouse gas emissions that go beyond the reductions gained through green building materials and technology. Developers are more frequently marketing 'green' developments in rural areas, but are failing to look at the overall impacts that these developments have in terms of greenhouse gas emissions from driving.

¹ Regional District of Nanaimo State of Sustainability Report September 2006

There are many other tools available to address greenhouse gas reduction such as the building code, automobile efficiency and emission targets, and provision of transit. However many of these tools are somewhat reliant on other levels of government both provincial and federal to make changes in their current legislation and direction.

In addition to the above, it is well documented that residential development in rural areas costs more to serve than it generates in tax revenue. For example, farms generate \$1.00 in revenue for every \$0.21 of services needed, but rural residential uses generate only \$1.00 for every \$1.20 on services used².

Of course we can not preserve landscapes of forests and fields and protect our agricultural and resource land base as provided in our Community Vision without making critical decisions on how we use our limited rural land. The saying "*you can't have your cake and eat it too*", holds true in this situation. We can not achieve our vision of becoming a leader in local food production or making agriculture and resource use priority in the rural areas without developing a strategy for how we use and manage rural lands in a more effective and efficient way. The community has some tough choices to make. In doing so the community must consider its options and the pros and cons of those options and make an informed decision.

There are a number of difficult questions that must be considered including:

1. Is allowing for the continued development of small acreages ranging from 2000 m² to 2.0 ha primarily intended and used for residential use with little or no agricultural or resource production throughout Electoral Area 'A' an option that will benefit the community and help us to become a leader in local food production and stewards of the environment?
2. The community's strategy on managing land use, especially in rural areas could have a positive and/or negative perceived and/or real affect on property values. Land which may have been previously subdividable under existing zoning, may no longer be subdividable if the community's direction is to increase minimum parcel sizes in certain areas to preserve land for agriculture and resource use (preserve landscapes of forests and fields) and preserve biodiversity. What should we do to address these concerns, while still focusing on achieving 'A Shared Community Vision'?
3. When we talk about preserving rural integrity and rural values, do we mean maintaining larger parcel sizes to limit subdivision in the rural areas, reduce land fragmentation, preserve natural habitats, and protect our ability to produce food? If so, what should the minimum parcel size be to support agriculture, resource use, and preservation of biodiversity?
4. If agriculture, resource use, and preservation of biodiversity is to be the primary use for rural areas (areas outside the Urban Containment Boundary), what should we do to encourage and support these uses and also to protect their long-term viability?
5. What role should residential use have in the rural areas? How much should be allowed, and where should it go?
6. How should we address the demand for rural acreages and how could we make it more desirable to develop within the Urban Containment Boundary?
7. How should we reduce the impacts of residential development on rural acreages in terms of impervious surfaces, greenhouse gas emissions, land fragmentation, land use conflicts, and ground water quantity and quality?

Please review the above questions, and come to the meeting prepared to discuss them.

² A case for smart growth Deborah Curran, West Coast Environmental Law, 2003.