

Regional District of Nanaimo

Summary of the Electoral Area 'A' Official Community Plan Review Citizen's Committee Meeting Held on Monday, April 20, 2009 @ 6:30pm At the North Cedar Improvement District Hall 2100 Yellow Point Road

Meeting called to order at 6:30 pm. There were approximately 40 people in attendance including guests.

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

Agenda Item No. 1 – Minutes of the April 6, 2009 Meeting

The minutes April 6, 2009 were moved by Ray Digby and seconded by Sharon Stannard and were approved without amendments.

Agenda Item No. 2 – Presentation 1 Maggie Henigman, Ministry of Environment

Ms. Henigman introduced herself as an Ecosystem Biologist with the Ministry of Environment. She explained that the Ministry used to accept about 1500 referrals from Local Governments on Vancouver Island, the result being that there was not enough time for anything else and it was not effective and not efficient. She indicated that in response, the Ministry moved to a results based format based on standards and outreach.

Ms. Henigman indicated that she would share some of the unique information about Electoral Area A and some of the current Ministry initiatives. Ms. Henigman provided an overview of biogeoclimatic zones. She indicated that Area A is in the Coastal Douglas Fir Zone, which is less than 0.3 % of the land area of the province. Ms. Henigman indicated that there other variant ecosystems within the Douglas Fir Zone which are dependent on site specific conditions and species. Ms. Henigman indicated that the lines which define the ecosystems are not well defined. She indicated that the E&N land grant includes most of the Coastal Douglas Fir Zone.

Ms. Henigman indicated that Area A is in the middle of the Coastal Douglas Fir Zone with vernal pools, wetlands, and many rare species. Ms. Henigman indicated that Area A has extremely shallow soils over unfractured sandstone that provides surface seepage that warms in the sun which results in very unique ecosystems which are very vulnerable to disturbance.

Ms. Henigman indicated that identified rare species in Area A include Vespar Sparrow, White-top Aster, Propertius Duskywing Butterfly, Water Marigold, Awned Cyperus, Nuttal's Quillwort, and Banded Cord Moss. Ms. Henigman indicated that the above are the known locations, which is not an exhaustive list.

Ms. Henigman spoke about eagle trees and the fact that the Ministry can only protect the tree, the nest, and can not protect a buffer. She indicated that soil compaction, disturbance, and windthrow affect eagle survival. Ms. Henigman indicated the Heron are threatened and extremely sensitive to human disturbance. She indicated that although there is a healthy eagle population, suitable nesting trees are less and less abundant. Ms. Henigman indicated that restrictive covenants don't work well for protection while park dedication, DPAs, and stewardship tend to work better.

Ms. Henigman provided an overview of the Wildlife Tree Stewards Program whose role is to monitor productivity of nests and potential threats. Ms. Henigman explained that there are about 3 heron colonies and 20 eagle nests in Area A.

Ms. Henigman gave a brief summary of the sensitive ecosystem inventory. She indicated that some of the sensitive ecosystems have been protected in some areas. Ms. Henigman indicated that these ecosystems provide free ecosystem services such as clean water, clean air, etc. Ms. Henigman indicated that there is a conservation manual that goes with the atlas, but no legislation that requires their protection.

Ms. Henigman provided an overview of the Riparian Areas regulation which is a directive for Local Governments to protect streams for fish habitat. She indicated that we need to protect streams to ensure streams are healthy and able to support fish species.

Ms. Henigman provided an overview of the Water Balance Model and Living Watersmart. She indicated that the rationale behind these programs is that the health of the ecosystem is dependant on water, especially surface water.

Ms. Henigman indicated that the province can protect the environment through the RAR, Wildlife Act, but have no ability to protect sensitive ecosystem polygons. She explained that the Federal Government can protect fish and species at risk on federal lands, but not private lands. Ms. Henigman indicated that Local Governments have the best tools for protect the environment through DPAs and park land dedication, but it requires community support to do it.

Agenda Item No. 3 – Presentation 2 Gilles Wendling, GW Solutions

Gilles Wendling began his presentation by providing an illustration of water movement through Area A. Some of the key points made during Gilles' presentation include:

- Area A was divided into three zones with three different water movement areas. Zone 1 occupies most of the area. Most of the water movement is from the Nanaimo River. In zone 2 the water moves towards the foreshore. In zone 3 water moves towards Ladysmith. Mr. Wendling provided an overview of zone 1, 2, and 3.
- With respect to groundwater use, the main users are from most to least Harmac, North Cedar Improvement District, Small water systems (mobile home parks and campgrounds), private wells. Mr. Wendling indicated that there is a number of surface water licenses in Area A.
- Mr. Wendling indicated that in Zone 1, the extraction from Harmac is approximately the same as the amount of precipitation. The Nanaimo River transfers a significant volume of water through zone 1.
- In Zone 2, the main input is precipitation and some trucked in water. The main output is evapotranspiration.
- In zone 3, the main factors are precipitation and evapotranspiration.
- Zone 1 has a water deficit of 4 to 1 during the critical time of the year (from September to October).
- Zone 2 has a water deficit during the critical time of the year (from September to October). The water deficit in zone 2 is very large.
- The aquifer and the rivers are closely connected.
- Zone 2 has this soils and a limited storage capacity.
- Water import is required in some areas of zone 2
- Zone 2 has a risk of salt water intrusion.
- Zone 3 has two very large aquifers with very small usage.
- There is only one water gauge and three monitoring wells in Area A.

- There is a lack of knowledge on what is happening between the Harmac intake and the Nanaimo River Estuary
- Additional information and knowledge on the Nanaimo River, monitoring wells and the impact of water level fluctuations on sensitive species is required.
- Mr. Wendling provided an overview of the DRASTIC mapping system.
- Mr. Wendling provided a map showing the vulnerability of aquifers in Area A showing areas with high, moderate, and low vulnerability. The area with high vulnerability occurs along the Cassidy aquifer and along the Nanaimo River. Most of the other area is moderately vulnerable.
- The vulnerability map is a tool to be used to identify where care should be taken.

Agenda Item No. 4 – Presentation 3 Jack Anderson, Official Community Plan Citizen's Committee

Mr. Anderson indicated that the OCP process is first class and that the community is rarely given an opportunity to provide this much input. Mr. Anderson indicated there are some other impacts that should be considered that are coming at a global level including peak oil and climate change.

Mr. Anderson gave a quote from the Transition Handbook by Rob Hopkins regarding the definition of peak oil. Mr. Anderson indicated that we have been graced with cheap fuels, it is what we were brought up with. Mr. Anderson spoke about climate change and the Greenhouse Effect.

Mr. Anderson explained that climate change may cause sea level rise, extreme weather, changes in rainfall patterns, flooding, and desertification. He indicated it is therefore important to become carbon neutral.

Mr. Anderson explained that climate change is likely to create higher costs for fuels, water shortages leading to food shortages, extreme weather around the world. He suggested that we need to start to think locally to grow our own food. Mr. Anderson indicated that we only grow 6% of the food we eat on Vancouver Island. He then indicated that we used to produce much more of the food we eat.

Mr. Anderson indicated that the typical response climate change and peak oil can lead to a condition called post petroleum stress disorder. He indicated that most people want to shut out the idea of climate change and peak oil. He provided an example of where people's opinions change when they are given positive alternatives. Mr. Anderson indicated that we need to create a vision of a positive alternative for people to aspire to and so that we are prepared if and when climate change and peak oil is upon us.

Mr. Anderson spoke about the need to build local resilience, which is the ability for communities to get all their needs locally. He explained it is a reversal of globalization.

Mr. Anderson spoke about food production and indicated that he was concerned that the Agricultural Land Commission does not differentiate between status quo and sustainable farming. He indicated that monoculture reduces soil fertility, requires the use of fertilizers, does not have diversity and natural resistance. Mr. Anderson indicated that polyculture is better for the soil, has more diversity, but is more labour intensive. Mr. Anderson suggested that some of the provincial agriculture policies may be hindering polyculture.

Mr. Anderson suggested that peak oil will require us to cycle and walk more. He suggested that there could be a green street on non-arable land linking Yellow Point Road to Cedar Road to encourage farming on smaller lots on the back side of existing farms and create a sense of community. He suggested that the OCP could support small neighbourhood pockets at the ends of the green streets and potentially eco-villages and community gardens. Mr. Anderson posed a question to the audience for having an option for having an emergency provision in the OCP that would be triggered if certain indicators of peak oil were reached.

Mr. Anderson provided an example of a sustainability checklist used by the City of Port Coquitlam which uses triple bottom line accounting. He indicated that the systems assesses points for environment, social, and economic sustainability and provides incentives such as reduced fees, fast tracking, etc to developers who score high.

Mr. Anderson suggested that we could look at having a DPA for sustainability and green cottage industry. He indicated that there are a variety of initiatives that the community could host an annual sustainability fair and could have a permaculture centre.

Agenda Item No. 5 – Presentation 4 Sean DePol, RDN Manager of Liquid Waste and Lindsay Dalton, RDN Liquid Waste Coordinator

Mr. DePol began his presentation by providing an overview of wastewater services in the RDN. He indicated that the RDN is in the process of reviewing the Liquid Waste Management Plan. He indicated that the RDN has no responsibility for individual septic systems, but the RDN does have an educational septic smart program.

Mr. DePol then spoke about the Duke Point Pollution Control Centre. He indicated that it was constructed in 1981 and upgraded in 1999. He indicated that the capacity is 910m³ per day. He indicated that it serves 22 industrial clients in the City of Nanaimo as well as the Cedar Secondary School. He indicated that the sewer line is being extended to the Cedar Estates development.

Mr. DePol indicated that the extra capacity for the collection system expansion was paid for by the developer of Cedar Estates. He indicated that the capacity of the Duke Point Pollution Prevention Centre is fully allocated. He explained that any additional properties being connected to the system requires a doubling of the treatment plant, which is a significant cost.

Mr. DePol indicated that the RDN operates on a user pay system so only those properties that benefit from sewer pay.

Mr. DePol indicated that the RDN is not eligible for sewer grants because we don't have minimum parcel sizes of at least 1.0 hectare outside the Urban Containment Boundary.

Lindsay Dalton indicated that the RDN has developed a Septic Smart educational program. She indicated that the RDN has received funding to develop a septic maintenance management study. Ms. Dalton spoke briefly about packaged treatment plants. She indicated that they require ground or water discharge and can be quite expensive.

Ms. Dalton provided an overview of the Liquid Management Plan. She indicated that the RDN is currently reviewing policies for package Treatment Plants and management strategies for onsite systems.

Agenda Item No. 6 – Presentation 5 Greg Keller, RDN Senior Planner

Mr. Keller provided a brief overview of the meeting workbook and indicated that the responses from all workbooks are due on May 22.

The meeting was closed at approximately 9:30 pm.

Certified correct by:

Director Joe Burnett, Committee Chairperson