

Association for the Protection of Rural Metchosin

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May 26, 2022

Mayor and Council
District of Metchosin
4450 Happy Valley Road
Victoria, BC V9C 3Z3

Dear Mayor Ranns and Council:

Re: Responding to policing cost increase

In the May 6, 2022 edition of the *Sooke News Mirror* Mayor Ranns commented on the substantial increase in policing costs that Metchosin is facing. The *Mirror* noted his comments as follows:

“Mayor John Ranns said council would have three choices to pay for policing: a “punishing” tax increase, boost residential development to increase Metchosin’s population – which Ranns ruled out – or approve industrial zoning projects...”

Respectfully, we believe this is not the moment to be narrowing the District’s options for addressing these cost impacts.

While the cost increase is significant, we are not in a situation where there’s a need to rush to solutions that that could undermine our Official Community Plan, our distinct character, and our history. We note that Metchosin’s Police Reserve Fund of ~\$1 million will mitigate some of the immediate financial impact of the increase in the short term. It is also important that residents have information about Metchosin’s tax rates, which are amongst the lowest in the CRD; in fact, Metchosin’s residential mill rate (general municipal) of 1.0480 is the second lowest in the CRD. Please see the attached.

The APRM is providing several recommendations on additional measures for determining the best course forward.

Confirm the actual cost impacts

While RCMP Inspector Todd Preston provided some information about policing costs at the April 25 Council meeting, what was presented was by no means definitive or precise. The APRM asks Council to confirm and clarify the actual costs for 2022 and those anticipated for the next five years.

Seek staff/consultant input on cost impacts and options for addressing impacts

We note that there has been no staff report on the policing costs and the impacts to residents. Once Council is confident of the actual costs, we ask you to direct staff to prepare a comprehensive report, which should include:

- The actual budget impacts for 2022 for policing.
- Projections on how each tax class will be impacted (i.e. changes to the respective mill rates). These projections should extend over a five-year period.
- Recommendations or options related to the Policing Reserve Fund. These may include a plan to allocate the remainder of the Fund over time, or whether the Fund may be 'topped-up' in other ways, such as directing budget surpluses (or a portion of those) to the Fund.
- Recommendations on additional sources of revenue generation (see below).
- An indication of how the unbudgeted costs for 2022 will be addressed.

We ask that both staff and external consultants be engaged to develop this report, the goal of which would be to give Council clarity on how much additional funding is needed and what policy alternatives exist to address funding shortfalls.

New sources of revenue and costs management

We request that Council consider what additional sources of revenue the District may generate, beyond increasing tax rates. This may be done through a review of the following:

- Fees (business licenses, building permits/inspections, other permits, etc.). An APRM member has recently asked if there's merit in a higher business licence fee for properties that have short-term vacation rental suites. Such a specific fee would recognize that these properties earn revenue for their owners, but do not necessarily pay additional property taxes.
- Cost-recovery mechanisms for land use applications. We believe that the District should no longer be expending costs and resources on major land use applications, such as subdivision or rezoning. Fees for minor applications, such as variances should also be examined.
- Special revenue generating projects. We ask Council to consider ideas and concepts that come from residents and community groups. Council may even wish to develop a citizen task force to explore new sources of revenue.

A critical area for cost-management is bylaw enforcement, where the District has allocated over \$149,000 in the 2022 budget. We recognize that the District has just reviewed the Municipal Ticket Information bylaw and is making progress on the Bylaw Enforcement Policy. We hope that both

will lead to continuing improvement in this area. Imposing fines where merited is an essential tool the District possesses. The goal in levying fines should not be revenue generation, but achieving compliance, the outcome being a more effective bylaw enforcement system, and avoidance of prolonged drains (costs) on municipal resources.

Property taxes - paying our fair share

With residential property owners being the largest contributors to the District's tax revenues, it is critical that we all pay our fair share. The APRM asks Council to consider the following:

- With our population increasing since the 2016 census, the number of new homes in Metchosin will have also increased. We would ask if BC Assessment has the most accurate data on housing types and sizes for every parcel in Metchosin, particularly for recently built homes.
- We understand that since the start of the Pandemic, BC Assessment has automatically allowed properties that were granted farm status prior to the pandemic to continue with that status without requiring proof of farm income. Council can ask BC Assessment to review the properties in Metchosin to ensure that the existing farm status is accurate. The difference in assessed value of certain properties could be substantial (~over \$1 million). This in turn could lead to additional sources of tax revenue.
- We also note that property owners that operate non-agricultural businesses on Agricultural Reserve Land enjoy tax advantages, compared to those operating elsewhere. This fact may also have relevance to a review of business licence fees noted above.

Federal Land Assessment

There are significant federal holdings in the District. When was the last time that land was assessed or discussions held with the federal government on fair valuation? We would urge Council to seek third party expertise to ensure that we are receiving the maximum grants in lieu of taxes from the federal government.

Thank you for considering these ideas. We recognize that the situation with policing costs will bring challenges to the community. We look forward to a careful and well considered discussion about a range of responses to those challenges, responses that will allow the District to protect our OCP and irreplaceable community character.

Sincerely,

Jay Shukin
President, APRM

CC: APRM Executive
Chief Administrative Officer, District of Metchosin

2022 Residential (Municipal General) tax rates (lowest to highest) – General Municipal, only

1.	Central Saanich	0.980752 (link)
2.	Metchosin	1.0480 (link)
3.	North Saanich	1.0756 (sent directly; website TBD)
4.	Highlands	1.1459 (not on website, yet. Received directly from Highlands)
5.	Sooke	1.81624 (link)
6.	View Royal	1.98712 (link)
7.	Sidney	1.92153 (link)
8.	Colwood	2.0763 (link)
9.	Langford	2.0884 (see bylaw 2070; April 19, 2022 Council agenda, page 97)
10.	Saanich	2.68315 (link)
11.	Victoria	2.8884 (link)
12.	Esquimalt	3.44892 (link)
13.	Oak Bay	Unknown