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Date: Wed, Jun 29, 2022 at 10:30 AM
Subject: Notes on June 27 Council Meeting

Hello everyone:

Below are the notes from Jay Shukin on the Council Meeting on Monday night, June 27.

The Buffer Land continued to be a topic of considerable discussion. Two residents pointed out what they saw as troubling omissions in the minutes from a recent Planning Committee meeting related to the Buffer Land. Mayor Ranns responded to comments asking for clarity on any relationship between the Buffer Land and Mary Hill. His response is captured in detail below. Interestingly (ironically?), that response makes its point by referencing minutes from past *in camera* (i.e. closed to the public) meetings.

There have been calls to launch a community engagement process on the future of the Buffer Land. This process, first discussed in early 2022, appears ready to start in early July. Learn more about the Buffer Land at www.metchosinbufferland.com

The Council meeting began with a presentation by Dr. Robert O'Connor on the family physician shortage in BC, and particularly here on the Island. Thanks to Dr. O'Connor and Steve Gray for their attention to this issue. Also see summaries of comments on environmental stewardship and "tiny houses on hillsides."

COUNCIL MEETING

[Full agenda at this link.](#)

Chair: Mayor Ranns. Attending: Councillors Epp, Kahakauwila, MacKinnon. Absent: Councillor Little.

Presentations (none indicated)

a) Dr. Robert O'Connor – Family Physician Crisis in BC

Dr. O'Connor reviewed the reasons for the family physician shortage in BC, and particularly on Vancouver Island, and steps that local governments could take. Reasons include: family medicine not keeping pace with inflation; housing prices high debt levels for new grads; work/life options available elsewhere; retirement surges; family medicine practitioners often have young families; COVID exhaustion. Jurisdictional issues were raised between the federal and provincial government: the federal govt has significant taxation powers, while the province administers healthcare. Dr. O'Connor suggested three actions for Metchosin to attract and retain physicians. First, create a welcome team for new arrivals. Second, offer scholarships to medical students. Even small grants will help with student debt. Third, urge action on a broader level by the provincial government, such as through the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM). He suggested the content for a letter.

Councillor MacKinnon asked for Dr. O'Connor's comments on a letter that Metchosin was considering sending to the UBCM, regarding a resolution on the family physician shortage. He noted a related letter (in the agenda package) from Langford, and also input from Steve Gray on the direction Metchosin should take in offering new approaches to the problem.

Dr. O'Connor felt Steve Gray's input was sound, given his experience as a physician and work at the provincial level. Councillor MacKinnon identified a section from Dr. O'Connor's presentation to be incorporated into a letter to UBCM from Metchosin.

Mayor Ranns asked further about the scholarship. He was aware of qualified local students who could not get accepted into Canadian universities, and eventually went to study in the U.S. It seems that there are a limited number of students who are accepted into medical schools.

Dr. O'Connor agreed, pointing to stats that show that for every seat in a Canadian medical school there are six applicants; in the U.S. there are two candidates per seat. There are other issues with training and complications between rural and urban environments. He spoke about "return of service" contracts as another method of attracting and retaining physicians.

Jay Shukin saw that there were some innovations being made to provide care during the doctor shortage, such as telephone access options. What were Dr. O'Connor's thoughts on the effectiveness?

Dr. O'Connor said there were benefits to practices like telehealth, such as efficiency and time. On the negative impacts, he wondered about the possible loss of "brick and mortar" offices where there was direct physician-patient contact. He noted that Telus is one of the largest providers of this service; they offer an "executive level" of care for an additional cost; this could become a draw for other physicians to enter this venue.

Bev Bacon wondered about owning and maintaining a local health care office for visiting (rotating) physicians. *Dr. O'Connor* pointed to two local examples that had not been successful. He wasn't sure that this would really improve the situation.

Sarah Anthony asked whether purchasing or renting a house for a physician in exchange for a term of service might work. Dr. O'Connor mentioned that this could be an option, however, he pointed to the current high cost of housing. There may be a time when housing is less expensive, and the opportunity may be there, even to support an office in the house.

Chris Moehr commented on the experience of two family members who were recent medical school graduates. In addition to practicing family medicine, they also wanted experience in a hospital setting. Are there barriers to doing so? Dr. O'Connor said there is the ability to do both. He has experience with colleagues who do so and operate with the flexibility between the office setting and hospitals, particularly for maternity care.

Public Participation

Nicole Shukin commented on errors of omission in the minutes for the June 13 Planning Committee meeting (agenda item 5(a)). She noted that the minutes appear to have been "scrubbed" of two politically significant exchanges. The first was Mayor Ranns's response to statements Nicole and Kathy Saluke made on June 13 about the possible sale of the Buffer Land. In response to their statements, Mayor Ranns asked them to declare whether they would in principle support an Indigenous Protected Area for Mary Hill. He did not explain how the Buffer Land was relevant or connected to Standstill Agreement discussions around Mary Hill. Nicole said that, if there was a connection, this shouldn't be implied in a cryptic and confusing way, but made public and transparent. The second omission involves Councillor Little, who felt it was important to state, contrary to the Mayor's assertion, that she had NOT been fully informed of private negotiations on the Buffer Land sale that were taking place over the course of 2020 and 2021. Both are serious omissions.

Nicole also commented on referendum processes. She felt there had been a serious loss of trust in the credibility of the 2017 referendum upon discovering that members of our District and Council intended not only to sell the Buffer Land to the CRD, but also Sections 95 and 28. She pointed to an information sheet circulated by the District prior to the 2017 Referendum that gave official assurance that the terms of the land swap (Reconciliation Agreement) were secured by legal contracts. She asked how these parcels could then be privately negotiated for sale in a different agreement over the course of 2020-21.

Mayor Ranns indicated that he would address these issues in his Mayor's Report.

Chris Moehr commented on an issue she termed "Tiny Houses on Hillside," in reference to a discussion at the May 30 Council meeting, where a group of residents proposed changes to our bylaws to allow for RVs and mobile tiny homes on Metchosin properties, potentially in place of a secondary suite. Chris said that this as a solution to 'homelessness' would be laughable if it was not so ill-informed. Metchosin's 'hillside' are already experiencing issues with well-water even before we see what will become of Langford's plans for development above our western lands. The attendant cost of necessary infrastructure, i.e., roads, septic, likely water and re-zoning, further loss of biodiversity, etc., also seems to escape those proposing this idea. There is also the question of access to employment and public transportation and the fact that this potential scenario flies in the face of our hard-won Official Community Plan. Homelessness and affordable housing is a regional issue. Metchosin has already done more than its fair share, having taken action with the legal allowance of secondary suites 30 years ago; more recently we also permitted, via referendum, the legalization of detached secondary suites. We've made numerous concessions to accommodate farm workers by allowing seasonal mobile living accommodation to ease the farm labour issue. The larger role that Metchosin plays within the CRD is that we are the provider of recreational green space. Chris noted the massive increase in day use traffic (60 -70%) over the past two years. This is due to COVID, but also from the failure of adjacent municipalities to provide their own adequate parks and recreational space. She pointed to parking and access impacts. If we cannot and have not been able to adequately

address our own residential by-law infractions for decades, how can anyone even consider stepping into this potential mess? Those who feel strongly about this issue should work with public institutions to develop appropriate and adequate solutions for affordable housing.

Selby Saluke discussed a concept for seeing environmental conflict in new ways after recently attending a Raincoast Conservation Foundation workshop. The focus was on generating ideas to reduce the impact of humans on the natural environment in the CRD. Councillor MacKinnon was Chair of the meeting. Selby shared several take-aways from the workshop. Municipalities must have environmental considerations as top-of-mind; environment should be prioritized over development proposals. Human activity always impacts the environment. This is particularly clear in Metchosin where we are surrounded by nature and natural systems that are more intact than in many other jurisdictions. We need to see our homes as part of a complex ecosystem. He addressed the serious disconnect between many individuals and their environment, asking if there is also a compassion disconnect. In an interconnected ecosystem human activity impacts other residents: neighbourhood impact studies should be as important as the required environmental assessments. By embracing land stewardship practices Metchosin residents can minimize the effects of physical change to the landscape. For example, by allowing the lesser used parts of our property to remain in their natural states. If we are fortunate enough to have a mature forest, or a small pond, or even a seasonal tributary where we live, we can encourage native flora and fauna simply by being mindful of our activity and letting nature do its own thing. The sooner we can begin to recognize the important role of natural landscapes in healing our relationship with the land, the better.

Jay Shukin noted that the minutes of the June 13 Planning Committee in the agenda package before Council are completely silent on two matters: Mayor Ranns's reference to the Mary Hill Indigenous Protected Area and comments from Councillor Little on the Buffer Land negotiations. These are two important issues and should be included in the minutes. Their absence typifies the concerns many have about the Buffer Land – the lack of transparency in the process around the Buffer Land. First, there was the surprise of the possible sale of the 112-acre parcel to the CRD for \$274,400. Through a freedom of information (FOI) request we learned of a future intention to sell sections 28 and 95. Like the Buffer Land, these are part of the 2017 Reconciliation Agreement, are to come to Metchosin following the completion of Treaty negotiations between the Crown and the Sc'ianew Nation. Jay was skeptical of earlier comments about a public consultation process flowing from the initial notice of the sale in October 2021. There was no indication that any process had been planned in the 1,500 pages of the FOI material. He quoted an email from a Metchosin staff member to the CRD that pointed to a rapid execution of the Buffer Land sales agreement:

“Hi [CRD contact], the agreement and the Section 219 will be on the in camera agenda for approval on Monday. Once approved by Council, staff will arrange a special Council meeting before the end of the week or on November 1 to authorize the CAO and the mayor to execute the agreement at an open meeting.

I trust this meets your timeline.”

(email dated Thursday, October 21, 2021). [NB: [see this email and other FOI material at this link.](#)]

Reflecting on the Land Swap, Jay said that many are seeing a major disconnect with the 2017 referendum vote in light of these possible land sales. He urged Council to not to jump to another referendum on an important community matter, such as industrial rezoning.

Bev Bacon supported the letter by View Royal Mayor David Screech on an Island Rail Corridor, and she asked that Metchosin take a similar position. This makes a lot of sense for shopping, commuting, for tourism. She asked that Metchosin send a letter in support of the rail corridor.

Adoption of Minutes

Reflecting on the comments during public participation, *Councillor MacKinnon* moved to discuss the June 13 minutes. He felt that Councillor Little would want her comments included in the minutes. It was then noted that the minutes in question were actually on the next agenda item. All three minutes were carried.

- a) [Council meeting, May 9, 2022](#)
- b) [Council meeting, June 6, 2022](#)
- c) [Special Council, Meeting, June 13](#)

Receipt of Minutes

[Planning Committee, June 13, 2022](#) .

Councillor Kahakauwila moved receipt of these and asked for a seconder for discussion. Councillor MacKinnon seconded. *Councillor Kahakauwila* indicated that the minutes were to be received, not adopted, and that these could be taken back to the Planning Committee where the concerns raised above could be addressed. She agreed that Councillor Little would probably want her comments included in the minutes. She will bring this back to staff to make the correction before this goes back to Planning for adoption.

Councillor MacKinnon addressed Mayor Ranns's comments in response to public statements at the June 13 meeting [i.e. on Mary Hill]. He felt that these should not be included in the minutes for two reasons. First, it's not typical to include the Chair's response to public participation comments. Second, and more importantly, the comments were a communication around the Mary Hill negotiations and there is a communication agreement in place on how information on Mary Hill is to be handled. Any communications in that respect should go through that protocol, to which Metchosin is a signatory.

Councillor Kahakauwila said that, as Chair of the Planning Committee, she does not have the opportunity to "scrub" the minutes (as was referenced in the public participation comments above). The minutes are taken by staff, based on the policies and procedures in place, and then these are brought forward. She said the minutes don't typically include comments from committee members during public participation.

The motion was carried.

Mayor's Report

Mayor Ranns commented generally about public participation sessions, saying that his approach has been to respond to public statements and questions, in order to be as transparent as possible. It's not been his style to simply ignore or nod at comments; he wanted to deal with the issues directly.

Mayor Ranns then noted the comments made about the "greenspace lands" [i.e. the Buffer Land] at the last two Council meetings. He also saw comments in the APRM minutes and on social media. Because of that, Council has reviewed the *in camera* [i.e. Council's confidential meetings] minutes for a certain time period. These have been reviewed and discussed. Based on that review, Council has instructed Mayor Ranns to read the following statements:

"First of all, between June 2021 and through to the end of October 2021...June 2021 to October 2021...there are meetings pre-dating that, but these are the meetings that we are dealing with, in camera meetings, there were five that took place between that period, between June (2021) and October (2021), in which all Council were informed and discussed the disposition of the greenspace by way of reviewing the agenda materials and approving the minutes. So, there were five meetings and the minutes were approved at subsequent meetings. Council through that time, through those meetings, unanimously provided directions to staff to negotiate specific terms and to undertake the process of disposition. Unanimously. The disposition of the greenspace was led by Council, not by the Planning Committee, and that Council, unanimously, was the decisionary-body. The agreement to move forward to not sell the greenspace was a decision made unanimously by Council. So, in other words, all of Council was fully informed throughout the process and instructions were given to the CAO to execute the resolutions that were made, all of it, unanimously."

[NB: the selective period of *in camera* meetings indicated by the Mayor does not account for the much longer period – starting as early as summer 2020 – that discussions with the CRD were occurring. [See this weblink for the timeline as revealed by the FOI records.](#)]

Mayor Ranns then addressed Mary Hill, which he hoped would explain why he asked the question at the June 13th planning meeting in response to resident comments. He noted that one of the most frustrating things as an elected official has been the need to keep certain information from the public. He doesn't agree *with it*, but he has *agreed to it*. He then read a statement that Council approved in order to clarify matters:

"In February of this year, the Steering Committee for the Sc'ianew Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) at Mary Hill publicly announced a Standstill Agreement between four parties: Sc'ianew First Nation, and three supporting parties: Habitat Acquisition Trust, the District of Metchosin and Pearson College, United World College. The agreement describes the on-going collaborative work of the parties in evaluating the potential IPA project on future Sc'ianew First Nation treaty settlement land at Mary Hill. The Standstill Agreement affirms that the Project

Steering Committee, made up of the Standstill Agreement signatories, is the forum for the discussion, deliberation and communication of all matters related to the Mary Hill IPA project. At this early stage of the Standstill Agreement, each party to the agreement is independently working to identify various ways in which they may contribute to a potential IPA at Mary Hill. Over the next year, ideas generated by each party will be reviewed and evaluated by the whole Steering Committee to determine which options may provide the best overall support for a future IPA outcome at Mary Hill. Options approved by the Steering Committee will then become part of the relevant community review process.”

Mayor Ranns indicated that Council has had numerous meetings under these “constricts” since the beginning of the term.

Mayor Ranns then addressed comments he made about the owner of the Swanwick farm property during the June 13 Parks Committee meeting, regarding the District waiting for a response from the property owner’s solicitor. Due to the fact that the District’s CAO was sick with COVID, the Mayor was not informed when the response had come in. He apologized to the property owner and their solicitor for suggesting that the response had not come in. He noted there had been further correspondence on the matter. [NB: this relates to the issue of the route between Taylor Beach and Weir Beach.]

The Mayor then made a Rise and Report about two new positions. Sherie-Lynn Tarnowsky will be the new Chief Financial Officer. Chris Watkins will be the new building inspector. Mayor Ranns welcomed them both.

Councillor Kahakauwila also reported that Katherine Lesyshen has started as the District’s new planner. There will be an article about her in the forthcoming Muse.

Councillor Epp commented on the Mighty Metchosin Garage Sale. It brought in a record amount of “stuff” and also a record amount of money (over \$40,000). Congratulations and thanks to all of the volunteers.

On July 1st the Metchosin Arts and Cultural Centre Association (MACCA) will host the Family Festivus Event. The event was to encourage folks to walk through the village area. There will be broad participation from groups and community members. The event runs from 11:00am to 2:00pm.

Councillor Epp noted the 150 Anniversary of the old Metchosin School House Museum on September 24.

This weekend also saw the 20th anniversary of the Metchosin Community House. An event was held to honour the three founders: Jo Mitchell, Jane Hammond and Betty Hildreth. *Mayor Ranns* commented about the central role that Jo Mitchell had in developing the House.

Reports for Action

- a) Staff Report, Request for Development Variance Permit (DVP), 852 Pears Rd [Staff Report](#)

Councillor Kahakauwila noted the adjustments that the property owners had made to their DVP application, moving the proposed secondary suite closer to the main building. A recommendation was put forward to notify the neighbours within 60 metres and of the July 18 council meeting when the DVP will be further considered. Carried.

- b) Staff Report, 2022 General Local Election, Deputy Chief Election Officer Appointment [Staff Report](#)

Amber Ward was named Deputy Chief Election Officer. Carried.

- c) Staff Report, 2022 DRAFT Annual Report [Staff Report](#) [Notice of Annual Meeting DRAFT Annual Report](#)

Moved that the annual report be received and that staff prepare the report for public review. Carried.

Reports for Action

- a) Building Inspection Monthly Report [Report](#)
b) Public Communication Report [Report](#)

Motion to receive both reports. Carried.

Correspondence

- a) Tim Morrison, CREST Chair, Update on Capital Region's Emergency Communications System [Correspondence](#).

Motion to receive. Carried.

- b) Mayor Stewart Young, City of Langford, Family Physician Crisis in B.C. [Correspondence](#)

Councillor MacKinnon proposed that Metchosin support a revision of the motion attached, taking into account input from local physicians Steve Gray and Robert O'Connor. The revisions would call upon the provincial government to "work with the family physicians of BC to make a long-term sustainable plan that supports the different types of practices." Carried.

- c) Mayor David Screech, Town of View Royal, Support for Island Rail Corridor [Correspondence](#)

Councillor MacKinnon mentioned that he supports this initiative and that Metchosin send a similar letter. Carried.

Question Period

Returning to the matter of the Buffer Land and sections 28 and 95, *Nicole Shukin* asked how those three parcels could even be “on the table” regarding Mary Hill? She felt that Metchosin residents were trying to convey that there is a public trust issue since these parcels are what Metchosin gets in return for transferring 350+ acres of its land to Langford. Isn’t renegotiating with them around Mary Hill like using the same cards twice? These parcels are bound by the terms of the prior 2017 referendum and land swap.

Mayor Ranns asked Councillor MacKinnon to respond. In answering *Councillor MacKinnon* took his time to reflect on the communications protocol/agreements mentioned above. He noted that the work and discussions about Mary Hill were done with an intent to honor the spirit of the 2017 land swap and that there are different ways to visualize a greenspace. He would not provide more on the *in camera* discussions or the negotiations with the CRD, or with potential links to Mary Hill, or not.

Jay Shukin asked about the timing of the public engagement on the Buffer Land. Also, given FOI findings about the District’s future intent to sell sections 28 and 95, would they also be part of the public engagement process?

Mayor Ranns said that the Standstill Agreement has an 18-month duration. The public consultation on the “Metchosin greenspace” will be handled by Councillors MacKinnon and Kahakauwila.

Councillor MacKinnon mentioned that this was a process championed by Councillor Little, who had to take time off due to a death in the family. He and Councillor Kahakauwila will move forward with this. A questionnaire and letter is in development which will be sent to residents nearest the Buffer Land.

Councillor Kahakauwila commented that Council is working to finalize a draft survey. The goal is to get this out by the end of next week [NB: this would put a mail-out around July 7-8].

Councillor MacKinnon said that the goal was to have responses back before the end of July.

Bev Bacon felt that the Buffer Land is a District asset and the survey should go to everybody who feels they have a stake in the future of this land.

Councillor Kahakauwila said that the individual letters are going out to the people who are nearest the Buffer Land. The intention from the very beginning was to have a more fulsome discussion involving the rest of the municipality. A survey will be available for all residents on-line through the District website, but the letters will be going out to those most affected. The goal is to get the majority of the information in the month of July and then move forward from there.

Shelly Donaldson asked how, in relation to the survey on the District's website, they will be able to track that online responses are from Metchosin residents?

Councillor Kahakauwila stated that, like any other survey, the information you get is the information you get. There was a discussion about building in locational parameters. Yes, there is the potential of outsiders filling out the online survey.

Councillor MacKinnon noted that there was a question on the survey asking "Are you a Metchosin resident?"

There was discussion about opening up the survey, on-line or by mail, to other Metchosin residents. There could be further steps based on the information received. The letter going out will mention at least one in-person meeting to be held. Councillor Kahakauwila commented on the input that Council has received to date, for example petitions and resident comments.

Kathy Saluke suggested that there be one person responsible for resident environmental concerns/complaints in the District. She relayed a story about a resident drawing water from a seasonal creek without proper authorization. Personal discussions have been undertaken without any results, despite pointing out that withdrawing water like this was illegal. District help is needed with a situation like this. There are other situations like this going on in Metchosin.

Mayor Ranns and the CAO said that this was under provincial jurisdiction and that a water licence was needed. There was discussion about what provincial government branch was responsible and could enforce. There was also discussion about the need for further education for residents and potentially involving MEASC.

Avril Yoachim asked about the amenity rezoning application for 4696 Beckingham Road.

Councillor Kahakauwila said that the information from the last meeting has gone to the planner, and then subsequently back to the applicant. It's now in the applicant's hands how they wish to respond. She said that if they want to look at an amenity consideration (i.e. increased lot density) the applicant should look at bringing in piped water. The community will then need to decide what to do with the greenspace that might result. There was discussion on the amenity zoning process vs. the subdivision process, which goes through the approving officer, and which does not have the public input opportunities that the amenity zoning process has. [NB: This property is ~100 acres and is zoned "Rural," which allows for five acre lots. The full development would be limited by subdivision infrastructure requirements (roads, rights-of-way, etc.), provincial riparian regulations and other considerations. In short, a basic subdivision application of this property would not result in 20 lots of five acres each].

Mayor Ranns noted the complexity of amenity zoning considerations. He said that piped water is of interest to Metchosin; getting this may justify increasing the lot density. Mayor Ranns spoke about the importance of community views on this.

Councillor Kahakauwila commented on the process and that amenity zoning allows for more possibilities for the public to consider.

The meeting adjourned at 8:46pm

This information is brought to you by the [Association for the Protection of Rural Metchosin.](#)