

**Electoral Area 'A' Official Community Plan Review
Community Forum
Summary of Community Presentations on Sustainability in a Rural Setting
May 10, 2008**

As part of the Community Forum a number of community members representing various community groups and interests were asked to provide a brief 5-10 minute presentation on what sustainability in a rural setting means to them. The following is a summary of the seven community presentations.

Presentation 1: Cedar Women's Institute represented by Anne Fiddick

Ms. Fiddick started by indicating that the Cedar Women's Institute is celebrating its 100th year anniversary and is part of the largest women's institute in the world. Ms. Fiddick spoke about sustainability and what it means. In essence she defined sustainability as meaning a combination of things including growth management, being able to be self sufficient, individual freedoms, respect for the environment, healthy community, and embracing culture, tradition, and an environment for change and innovation

The Cedar Women's Institute is concerned with the increasing development pressure from large scale developments in Cedar and the implication on land values as lands adjacent to farming areas area developed. She noted that just because land is not located in the Agricultural Land Reserve it does not mean that it can not provide marketable agricultural goods.

Ms. Fiddick spoke to a concern over food security and the need to ensure that we maintain the ability to feed ourselves by not supporting the subdivision of agriculturally productive lands. Ms. Fiddick stressed that we need to embrace and entrench the right to farm in the Official Community Plan. Ms Fiddick added that we also need to encourage local food production. She stated that the Official Community Plan must embrace sustainability with policy that awards and rewards change to consumer behaviours.

Ms. Fiddick stated that we must encourage young people to farm and that farming needs to be a job with an income that can sustain a family. She stated that the Cedar Women's Institute is opposed to all "Mega-development projects" not because they don't like progress but because they are not sustainable. She suggested that we need tests to determine what meets sustainability criteria.

With respect to the environment, Ms. Fiddick indicated that sustainability also means the ability to maintain and respect unique ecological features like the fragile sandstone, Gary Oak meadows and renewable resources. Ms. Fiddick then spoke to her concern about ground water quality.

Ms. Fiddick suggested that for the Area 'A' Official Community Plan to be useful it must not ignore what goes on both inside and outside of the Electoral Area 'A' boundaries.

Ms. Fiddick spoke to a concern over the Official Community Plan review process and the need to ensure that future land use decisions are consistent with the Plan and that the Official Community Plan is defended in the future. Ms. Fiddick stated that public participation is critical and essential in allowing people to have control over their own lives and what affects them.

Ms. Fiddick suggested that sustainability embraces a community with a history, a plan for the future, a heart, and a soul that reflects the population. She suggested that it also have a range of amenities and uses that cater to all of its citizens.

Ms. Fiddick stated that the Official Community Plan must include the possibility of Cedar becoming a District Municipality in order to provide a more desirable level of services and amenities and better respond to community issues.

Presentation 2: Nanaimo Regional Airport represented by Michael Hooper

Mr. Hooper started by explaining that there is difference between functionally rural lands with viable agriculture, forestry, and other uses and aesthetically rural lands with rural residential development. Mr. Hooper explained that historically, development has continually encroached into prime agricultural land and forest land. He also explained that we don't have to continue to follow the historical growth patterns and in the future can shift towards a two-tiered development pattern that includes mixed use villages and large rural parcels that support those villages. He further explained that in the future development should include nodes of mixed use villages separated by large rural parcels and connected by transit and infrastructure.

Mr. Hooper cautioned that Electoral Area 'A' is primed to become a large urban centre if we are not careful in planning for the future. Mr. Hooper used the City of Vancouver as an example.

Mr. Hooper explained the need for change and a reduction of our reliance on a fossil fuel based economy, especially as oil prices rise and supplies are diminished. He indicated a need for more sustainable planning at all levels of government and community and the need to create linkages between all affected levels.

Mr. Hooper suggested that we need to create more sustainable growth patterns by identifying and developing village nodes, creating a sustainable agriculture and food strategy, and by creating a parks and recreation strategy.

Presentation 3: G&G Roofing represented by Jill Maibach

Ms. Maibach explained that sustainability means giving careful consideration to land lot and parcel sizes in an effort to nurture the ambiance of rural living. She indicated that it also means having green spaces for people to enjoy, while at the same time having land uses which integrate commerce within the community to reduce travel. Ms. Maibach

stated that sustainability includes consideration for areas where higher density should be supported to provide amenities, affordable housing, and to provide for a broader range for the community.

Ms. Maibach indicated that sustainability means paying special attention to the preservation of parks and green space and the waterfront. Ms. Maibach stated that it is important to identify, document, and protect the unique and pristine ecosystems in Electoral Area 'A'.

In closing, Ms. Maibach indicated that social sustainability means recognizing and meeting the needs of all levels of the family unit, which in turn builds a close knit community where people know their neighbours, and can come together for fellowship, sharing the history and culture prevalent in Electoral Area 'A'.

Presentation 4: Mid Island Sustainable Stewardship Initiative (MISSI) represented by Jack Anderson

Mr. Anderson explained that the purpose and role of MISSI is to educate the community on sustainability issues and to work with the community on achieving a more sustainable region.

Mr. Anderson explained that MISSI wants the Electoral Area 'A' Official Community Plan to ensure that we become the most sustainable rural Electoral Area on Vancouver Island. He continued by stating that MISSI is not NIMBY (not in my back yard) by nature, but they do not want un-sustainable development. Mr. Anderson indicated that we should target the "Green Developers" out there and encourage them to come to Electoral Area 'A' by using various incentives such as tax incentives, density bonusing, approval fast tracking, use of a more comprehensive sustainability checklist, etc. He indicated MISSI's support for the reestablishment of a citizen based Area Planning Commission with a strong mandate for sustainability.

Mr. Anderson stated that we need to have an Official Community Plan with teeth that doesn't allow for misinterpretation, but also allows for flexibility to respond to unique situations. He suggested that the Official Community Plan needs to respond to the impacts of climate change, needs to shift towards a local economy, and needs to address land use in response to soaring fuel prices. Mr. Anderson stated that the Official Community Plan needs to understand the difference between rural and urban sustainability as Electoral Area 'A' is mainly rural.

Mr. Anderson concluded by stating that the Official Community Plan needs to include pedestrian and cycling greenway linkages. He finished by stating that we need to enhance land within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR), not just save land within the ALR and recognize the value of small lot farming.

Presentation 5: Nanaimo-Cedar Farmer's Institute represented by Joanne McLeod

Ms. McLeod spoke to her concern over food security and the need to use the Electoral Area 'A' review to address local food production. She then focused on the topics of land and water. With respect to land Ms. McLeod indicated that there are nearly 500 farms in the Regional District of Nanaimo. She they stated that since 1974, one sixth of he ALR has been removed from production and we need to be more diligent in protecting ALR land. She explained that farmers are not here to create a rural atmosphere, they are here to grow food and they need land to do that. She recommended that a moratorium on land removal from the ALR be put in place.

Ms. McLeod stated that we need to contain urban sprawl and be very thoughtful about the negative effects some developments can have when they encroach on farm land. She explained her concern with respect to increased traffic from new development in rural areas leading to difficulties with the movement of farm equipment on rural roads often with narrow unpaved shoulders. Ms. McLeod asked suggested that development applications include a detailed traffic study looking at the impacts of the development on rural roads.

With respect to water, Ms. McLeod indicated her support for the proposed Regional District of Nanaimo "Drinking Water – Watershed Protection Action Plan", but suggested that the plan should go beyond drinking water and also look at water for agriculture. She also suggested that the Official Community Plan supports the preservation and allocation of water for agriculture.

Presentation 6: South Wellington and Area Community Association (SWACA) represented by David Dunaway

Mr. Dunaway welcomed the forum attendees to South Wellington and then began his presentation by speaking about South Wellington. Mr. Dunaway spoke to his concern over South Wellington becoming another one of Nanaimo's bedroom communities and the historical dependence on unsustainable fossil fuel use.

Mr. Dunaway suggested that South Wellington could be a model sustainable community if the new Official Community Plan provided greater incentives for green development including identifying South Wellington as a node which included places to live, work, play, shop, and access services. He then spoke to his desire to transform South Wellington into an enviable community where people would want to live. Mr. Dunaway suggested that South Wellington could use nodal development to reduce the need for automobile use.

As a more enviable community, suggested Mr. Dunaway, South Wellington would have to carefully manage growth to ensure the lands with agricultural and other resource and environmental values are protected. He stated that South Wellington could be transformed from a community on the verge of oblivion into a model sustainable community.

Presentation 7: Snuneymuxw First Nation represented by Dave Mannix

Mr. Mannix indicated that there were 10,000 to 15,000 first nations people in this area prior to contact and now there are about 130,000. Mr. Mannix suggested that sustainability is a state of mind that shifts over time. He indicated that sustainability is about protecting an area's attributes.

Mr. Mannix explained that there needs to be discussions about sustainability and that trade offs and compromises need to be made. He indicated that there are no easy answers. Mr. Mannix explained that sustainability is also about reinstating First Nations culture through self-governance. Mr. Mannix indicated that sustainability is also about being self sufficient. He indicated that in order to be self sufficient we need to maintain farm land and we need transit. Mr. Mannix indicated that we need to make a conscious decision on whether or not to become a city.

Mr. Mannix explained that we should start setting aside core land for transit and other critical uses and we need to do a better job of creating the community that we want to see in 20-30 years from now.