

Regional District of Nanaimo
Summary of the Electoral Area 'A' Official Community Plan Review
Citizen's Committee Meeting Held on Monday, January 10, 2011 at 6:30pm
At the North Cedar Improvement District Hall
2100 Yellow Point Road

Joe Burnett	Committee Chair
Jack Anderson	Committee Member
Garry Laird	Committee Member
Joanne McLeod	Committee Member
Geoff Macaulay	Committee Member
Chris Pagan	Committee Member
Anne Fiddick	Committee Member
Donna Sweeney	Committee Member
Christina Metherall	Drinking Water and Watershed Protection Coordinator
Greg Keller	Senior Planner
Stephen Boogaards	Recording Secretary

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:37 pm by the Chair. There were approximately 9 people in attendance.

MINUTES

The motion to adopt the summary of minutes from November 8, 2010 was held in abeyance pending an appropriate quorum of Citizens Committee members.

YELLOW POINT AQUIFER PROTECTION DEVELOPMENT PERMIT AREA

Greg Keller introduced Christina Metherall, the RDN Drinking Water and Watershed Coordinator, and explained that she would be briefly reviewing her presentation from the last meeting on the Yellow Point aquifer. Ms. Metherall explained that the large bedrock aquifer has very little ability to hold water and takes a while to recharge itself, so it is not well suited to large extraction such as urban development. Information collected through meetings with the public, well drillers, hydrogeologists and the Ministry of the Environment together indicates there may be a concern with the aquifer.

Mr. Keller explained the draft development permit area for the Yellow Point aquifer which the committee supported at the last meeting. He explained the limitations of water conservation Development Permit Areas as imposed by the Local Government Act.

Mr. Keller provided a brief summary of the last meeting where the committee suggested that the development permit area should apply to all subdivisions. Mr. Keller suggested that this may be unreasonable due to cost of the hydrogeological study. He explained that the current draft of the development permit area guidelines, the threshold for the completion of a study is the creation of three or more lots. In staff's discussion with a hydrogeologist, it was estimated a hydrogeological assessment as required by the proposed development permit area would cost about \$15,000 to \$20,000 with most of the cost going towards the drilling and pump testing of a well. Mr. Keller suggested that the committee may consider removing the requirement for the study or increasing the number of lot threshold for the study so that it applies to larger subdivisions.

The group discussed the cost and application of the hydrogeological study, in particular for small subdivisions. The point was made that the requirement may create an impediment to development. Alternately another comment made suggested that only large developers would be able to afford to do the study. Ms. Metherall suggested that though the RDN does not have completed information on the well or recharge area they do have an opportunity to take a precautionary approach to managing land use over an aquifer that may be a concern.

Some members of the group discussed the potential for a community wide study to determine the status of the Yellow Point aquifer. Mr. Keller explained that the draft Official Community Plan supports more data collection and study on the aquifer. Ms. Metherall also explained that aquifer characterization or water modeling would take time and would be very costly. Measuring existing wells will only indicate the status of the aquifer at the current time, to determine the long term decline of the aquifer a pumping test is needed which will help to determine how the aquifer will respond over the next 25 years. The group discussed the possibility of another parcel tax for the properties over the Yellow Point aquifer to fund the necessary studies.

The group discussed incentives for cisterns. One of the committee members suggested that the development permit area could provide exception for dwelling units that are not connected to groundwater as long as the cistern is approved by a building inspector. Mr. Keller suggested that an exemption to the development permit area for a dwelling not connected to groundwater is a possible incentive. The group discussed the methodology for estimating the required storage tank capacity for rainwater, being 30% of 740L per day for 90 days. Ms. Metherall explained that for conservative water use this storage tank may be sufficient for total water use by a dwelling and may not be very expensive to install compared to drilling a conventional well.

The committee voted to incorporate the development permit area within the Official Community Plan with an exception for dwellings not using groundwater.

In Favour – 6

Opposed – 1

NORTH CEDAR IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT WELLHEAD PROTECTION

Greg Keller explained that the North Cedar Improvement District (NCID) approached the RDN to include requirements for the protection of their wellheads through the Official Community Plan. Mr. Keller presented a proposed wellhead protection strategy which was attached to the meeting agenda.

The group discussed what the NCID can do on their own. It was suggested by someone in the group that currently land owners around the wellhead do not want to sell their land and the NCID cannot afford to purchase the land. Someone in the group suggested that people are starting to notice the river adjacent to the wellhead is being contaminated by septic tanks as algal bloom is earlier every year.

Mr. Keller informed the group that the development permit area must be mapped in the Official Community Plan. The group expressed concerns about the lack of application to future wellheads and security around existing wellheads. Mr. Keller explained that if the development permit area map shows the location of the wellheads than it can be amended later with new wellheads. Alternately the development permit area may apply to a larger area than just the 90m wellhead setback. Within the larger area all development is exempted except where it is within 90m of a wellhead, similar to the development permit area for the Riparian Area Regulations. The committee was not comfortable making a recommendation on the wellhead protection development permit area at the meeting without hearing back from NCID on the proposed wellhead protection strategy.

DRAFT OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN

Greg Keller explained that he will take the information discussed at the meeting and make amendments to the Yellow Point aquifer development permit area. The Official Community Plan will be going for first and second reading in February. The group discussed the policies in the food production section of the Official Community Plan and the potential for organic farming.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:01 pm.

Certified correct by:

Director Joe Burnett, Committee Chairperson