



Salt Spring Island Housing Action Program Task Force Special Meeting Minutes

Date: Friday, August 6, 2021

Location: United Church Meadow
111 Hereford Avenue

Members Present: Rhonan Heitzmann, Chair
James Back
Nejmah Guermoudi
Meror Krayenhoff
Stanley Shapiro
Jessica Terezakis
Daniel Wood

Regrets: None

Absent: Kerrie Proulx, Vice Chair
Maïkan Bordeleau
Bryce Chapman
Yvonne Saunders

Staff Present: Geordie Gordon, Planner 2
Daniela Murphy, Recorder

Others Present: Adam Olsen, Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) for Saanich North and the Islands
One member of the public

These minutes follow the order of the agenda although the sequence may have varied.

The meeting was called to order at 1:53 p.m. Chair Heitzmann welcomed staff, MLA Adam Olsen and Task Force members and acknowledged the meeting is being held in Coast Salish First Nations treaty and traditional territory. MLA Olsen offered a territorial acknowledgement as well.

1. CALL TO ORDER

1.1 Approval of Agenda

By general consent, the agenda was adopted.

2. DISCUSSION WITH MLA ADAM OLSEN

In discussion the following questions and comments were noted:

- There was a question about the offering of territorial acknowledgements and how is it that the Islands Trust is a land use authority over unceded territory.
 - MLA Olsen advised that there is a general acknowledgement that what is seen today as government and legislative framework is not likely to cease to exist. He spoke of reconciliation and the reasons for it, expressing that there will be challenges in the coming months and years. The courts have determined that (sole) Crown sovereignty is not correct, and that there is a shared sovereignty with the Indigenous people. How the Province accommodates and reconciles lands that have been unceded, and sharing of sovereignty is a challenge of Crown governments. There already exists a shared sovereignty with different levels of government. MLA Olsen stated that the real thing to address are the racist beliefs that Indigenous people are somewhat lesser and cannot manage things (e.g. lands, money). He advised that the Province will partner with Indigenous people, just as they partner with everyone else. He spoke to the stewardship model of land use, and how our generation has learned from previous generations, we can unlearn from them as well though it will take time, compassion and love to get to where we need to get to.
- There was a question if Salt Spring Island were to be a model of collaboration, taking guidance from First Nations on how to move forward – how could this be achieved?
 - MLA Olsen spoke to finding a way to live together in communities with each other and finding ways to solve problems. The Gulf Islands and their uniqueness has been lost to the same settlement patterns seen on the Saanich peninsula, i.e. single family homes. He spoke to an example of a property with multiple dwellings and residents supporting one another. MLA Olsen referred to North Saanich as a largely residential and agricultural area, with no available professional services. The Gulf Islands need to have a variety of housing to support the work force and the quality of life that community members expect. He advised that a rethink of how the land is zoned and used may be required, and referred to Islands Trust planners to assist with this.
- There was a question regarding what MLA Olsen meant by “services”.
 - MLA Olsen replied that services means places for childcare, seniors care and homes for doctors, nurses, and construction workers. Without self-reliance, Salt Spring’s community will suffer.
- There was a question as to whether zoning a multi-family parcel to affordable housing would solve part of the issue.
 - MLA Olsen advised that zoning (Islands Trust) is only part of the solution to the housing problem. There is also water and sewer, for example, that would need to be addressed. He spoke to the population and capacity of the island being an issue. To have 1 million people on Salt Spring Island would make for a very different island than what is experienced today. The community would experience high population density and would need to pump water in and pump sewer out. MLA Olsen spoke to the philosophical view of how home ownership is currently viewed and the option of living with family. He advised that with the housing issue, there are various government bodies responsible and they need to work in concert with one

another. A multi-jurisdictional meeting is required with the Province, Capital Regional District and Islands Trust in order to move together and effect change. He commented on the housing challenges in all of the Province, not just the Gulf Islands.

- There was a question on these government bodies and how to organize such a multi-jurisdictional meeting.
 - MLA Olsen advised that there currently is a meeting once a month of the Southern Gulf Islands forum. This meeting allows leaders to share where they are at with various challenges in their community. All Trustees, the CRD Directors, MP Elizabeth May, MLA Olsen and First Nations Chiefs attend this meeting. The forum is still in its initial stages, but may be the right outlet for this housing issue, and he spoke to the fact that it would bring an Indigenous voice to the issue.
- There was a comment about congregate housing and the benefit to having amenities and transportation options within walking distance.
 - MLA Olsen spoke to the Task Force about coming up with policy ideas, and how the challenge is to move people past barriers. He spoke to the land use bylaw and real estate market being things that people have created and treat with reverence as people have significant investments in land.
- There was a comment that community members have different values, such as wealth, farming, earth stewardship, but that everyone needs someone at some point.
- There was a comment about Ganges being a busy hub, and the potential in Fulford to create an expanded village. There was a further comment about how communities could be built around homes.
- There was a concern that topics (i.e. housing, transportation) are talked about separately, but that these topics should be considered together and that Salt Spring could be a model for other communities. There was further concern that thinking continues to be in the old paradigm, but there are many ways to do things differently and that collaborative government has to do more than just build boxes to house people.
 - MLA Olsen replied that the Province creates legislation that the Islands Trust and other local government enact. He expressed that there may be a philosophical block but often it is a regulatory framework that does not permit something to transpire. MLA Olsen encouraged the Task Force members to write down any policies or legislation that they come across that seem to prevent something, and share these findings with the Trustees and himself. He emphasized that he is here to serve the community and will look at the policy and the reasons for its existence and explore the possibility that the policy needs to be changed. MLA Olsen noted that staff is not obstructive in the process, but rather, are following the legislation. He explained the process for the legislation to be changed: It starts at the Islands Trust level, then is brought forward to the Provincial level.
- There was a comment about affordable housing, referring to the cost of building and the cost of land. There was a reference to the 99 year leases by the Musqueam Band at the University Endowment Lands. The cost of land has constrained how land is now developed. There was a question as to whether a 99 year lease could be implemented, where the land is private for that time, but then reverts back to public land.
 - MLA Olsen replied that the federal government created two models for communities: municipal and a reserve system. In the municipal model, there is a question of how much the land is worth. In the reserve system model, the land is worth nothing. He noted that the real estate market is out of control and has put

well paid people into challenges of home ownership. He noted that the status symbol of home ownership has to change, as it has become unsustainable.

- MLA Olsen offered suggestions as to alternative home designs, such as creating a home that could permit a duplex in future. He also noted that there are several houses on Salt Spring Island with multiple rooms. A change in the legislation may possibly house unrelated people in the same home.
- There was a concern regarding the housing crisis, suggesting issues need to be addressed immediately, in addition to the longer paradigm shift. It was noted that people are desperately looking for housing on-island. There was a further comment that people used to commute off-island to find work, but now people commute to Salt Spring.
- There was a comment to focus on something that can be done with some tangible outcome.
- There was a comment that the long-term goal is the creation of the interjurisdictional housing authority. A member asked MLA Olsen how he could help create this authority and navigate the bureaucratic obstacles. There was a further question on how the Speculation tax could be implemented.
 - MLA Olsen suggested that he or a member of his staff could sit in on the Housing Action Program Task Force meetings so that when these types of questions come up, he can be there to help. With regards to the Speculation tax, he has been in conversation with the Minister of Finance and he anticipates a deeper conversation in the Fall. He advised that the problem with the Speculation Tax is that the monies go to General Revenue.
- There was a comment about the model for worker housing in Whistler.
- There was a comment that there needs to be a shift towards Indigenous views that need to be supported. There was a question whether there could be an Indigenous voice on the Task Force.
 - MLA Olsen advised that the capacity to address this request could be challenging and suggested contacting Lisa Wilcox, Islands Trust Senior Intergovernmental Policy Advisor for guidance. He advised that the Task Force could do the work and then invite First Nations to review or comment.
 - MLA Olsen advised that the government will have an intense focus on housing.

4. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 3:01 p.m.

Rhonan Heitzmann, Chair

CERTIFIED CORRECT:

Daniela Murphy, Recorder