DISTRICT OF METCHOSIN

AGENDA

BUFFER LAND WORKING GROUP MEETING
JUNE 6, 2023 at 4:30 PM
COUNCIL CHAMBERS, MUNICIPAL HALL

1. **Agenda, Additions, Approval**

2. **Presentations**

   a) Nicole Shukin: Green Infrastructure Concept – Buffer Land Border

3. **Public Participation**

4. **Adoption of Minutes**

   a) Buffer Land Public Input Meeting, May 9, 2023 1

   b) Buffer Land Working Group Meeting, May 17, 2023 5

5. **New Business**

   a) Buffer vision/concept statement

   b) Review of the option tracking table 7

   c) Identification of options and input into the tracking table

6. **Next Meeting Date and Adjournment**

District of Metchosin

Minutes

Public Input Meeting - Buffer Land Working Group
Tuesday, May 9, 2023 at 7:00 P.M.
Council Chamber
Metchosin Municipal Hall

Working Group members present:
Councillor Jay Shukin (Chair), Councillor Shelly Donaldson (Co-Chair), Bonnie Bouveur, Richard Simpson, Gary Smirfitt, Bailey Spiteri.

Regrets:
Anna Hall, Karen Hoffman, Brian Grant

Council members present (other than members of the Working Group):
Mayor Marie-Terese Little, Councillor Steve Gray

The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm.

Councillor Shukin provided an overview of the evening in that a presentation would be provided on the Buffer Land to give background and context, followed by an opportunity for community input.

Councillor Shukin delivered the presentation, which covered:

- The Working Group's (WG) mandate per the Terms of Reference. Key task is to identify and evaluate options on the future of the Buffer Land, keeping in mind that 2017 referendum that the land is a "greenspace buffer."
- Names of the working group members
- The WG's evaluation criteria: Neighbour impacts; Financial impacts; Practicality / Feasibility; Legal and land use considerations (i.e. covenant, zoning, etc.; other criteria as determined by the Working Group
- Background on the 2017 Land Swap and Reconciliation Agreement
- Recent issues regarding the Buffer Land
    - The potential sale to the CRD as announced in October 2021.
    - The covenant and easement allowing for one or more stormwater detention ponds to serve Centre Mountain Estates (CME).
    - The Letter of Understanding regarding trails through the Buffer Land.
- Community and advisory committee input received to date, including the input from:
    - The Parks and Trails Advisory Select Committee (PTASC)
    - The Metchosin Environmental Advisory Select Committee (MEASC)
    - The community (Neild Rd & area) through a survey, August/Sept 2022.
- A review of key questions and matters related to the future of the Buffer Land:
    - Environmental protection and enhancement
    - Riparian and stormwater
    - Access
    - Zoning

- Fiscal considerations

Public input commenced.

Brent Donaldson agreed that there was a "buffer" function that was important for this parcel, particularly if conservation and environmental protection was a goal. He asked if the WG could explore what other jurisdictions have done in light of similar challenges in managing access to areas that were intended to be preserved.

Pattie Whitehouse saw that there was general agreement about keeping the Buffer land in a natural state. The question is how to do that. Fencing has been discussed; however, fencing could potentially interfere with wildlife movement. Signage would likely have limited impact. Having some sort of 'patrol' of the area will likely be costly. The WG should research other locations and examples.

Chris Moehr, through a letter read by Kathy Saluke, said that questions about the Buffer Land are some of the most important land use considerations Metchosin has faced. She noted all the work done over the years to develop our local trail network. This has resulted in significant increase in traffic and visitors, as the adjacent municipalities are not providing adequate greenspace for their residents. Considerations for the future of the Buffer Land need to consider climate change factors and biodiversity goals, particularly for future generations. We may wish to explore legally prohibiting access to the buffer land, via zoning considerations or making this a dedicated conservation area. Consider seeking federal funding to support conservation initiatives. Be creative and keep an open mind.

Nicole Shukin wanted to protect the Buffer Land for human impacts and suggested that no specific recreational activities be allowed in the area (particularly mountain biking). Look at a new zone, one that prioritizes ecological restoration. She wondered whether Metchosin has the resources to manage the Buffer Land, and she asked the WG to keep open the possibility of the CRD's involvement, contingent on adequate environmental protections being established, per conditions established by Metchosin. A trail along the Metchosin-Langford border could help manage human access.

Councillor Donaldson noted that there may be opportunities for research and study within the Buffer Land involving some of the local colleges/universities (Royal Roads, UVic, Camosun). There are areas within the Buffer Land that are pristine forests, and worthy of study.

Gary Smirfitt (WG member) raised cautions about any CRD's involvement. He felt that Metchosin could well lose control of the lands, particularly over time with new elected officials and staff having new ideas.

Councillor Shukin stated that his understanding is that the CRD does not typically partner with local governments in terms of park management.

Bailey Spiteri (WG member) wondered about how the CRD would deal with the possibility of a storm water detention pond.

Werner Schmidt stated his opposition to the CRD being involved in the Buffer Land. He asked about the covenant and easement relating to the stormwater detention pond. What the current status?

Gary Smirfitt provided background on the covenant allowing for the construction of one or more stormwater detention ponds in the Buffer Land, as well as the process related to the siting and approval of

the stormwater system. He understands that a preliminary stormwater management plan has been provided to the District. The District must approve the plan before work begins.

Councillor Donaldson reviewed information she has heard to date regarding the CME residential development, particularly around the location of homes right along the edge of the buffer. Pointed to the logging and site clearing activities. It was important to get the stormwater plan right, as stormwater from CME will find its way into Bilston Creek and the area is rocky and likely highly impermeable. Need to make sure the system slows the water flow.

Karen Watson stated her support for a new zoning designation for the Buffer Land, but asked that consideration to including Section 95, when this comes to Metchosin per the terms of the Reconciliation Agreement. She did not support involving the CRD in managing or owning the Buffer Land.

Richard (last name not known) asked about an area within the Buffer Land that has already been logged. He noted that stormwater would likely find its way into that area, due to its low elevation relative to where the homes will be.

Councillor Donaldson provided background on this area, indicating that there was an old logging road and that there had been logging as part of the past golf course proposal.

Avril Yoachim pointed out that Metchosin receives ~$12K tax revenue annually per the Reconciliation Agreements tax sharing provision. She asked whether this money could be invested in the Buffer Land.

Kym Hill noted the concerns that the Bilston Watershed Habitat Protection Association (BWHPA) has with the stormwater plan for CME and impacts on Bilston Creek. She also wondered what was going on with stormwater management for Centre Mountain Business Park. She asked whether Metchosin should have had an opportunity to comment on those plans. There is an opportunity to work together on matters, such as improving summer flows into Bilston Creek or creating habitat opportunities within the detention pond.

Councillor Shukin said he would like the WG to also explore the "do nothing" option. That is, what would happen if we just let the land be as it is right now, and no steps were taken to protect/conserve the area. For clarity, he was not supportive of "doing nothing;" however a closer look at such an approach would likely reveal the deeper risks, particularly of not actively protecting Metchosin's important edge areas. He reflected on a comment heard last year on how a community's core characteristics can be significantly impacted once its edges begin to change.

Richard Simpson (WG member) commented on the importance of protecting the natural environment found in the Buffer Land. The WG needs to find examples where conservation has occurred next to areas of high housing density areas. Impacts to wildlife are already occurring from the land clearing to date. Need to be proactive in our objectives with the Buffer Land.

Katy Nelson supported a new zoning status for the Buffer Land. She asked how a new zone is created, particularly one that supports conservation goals. Would this require and amendment of the Official Community Plan? She asked that the WG research what other communities were doing.

Avril Yoachim noted that new zoning should support the goals that are set for the Buffer Land. If conservation were a goal, fencing in certain areas might be considered in terms of managing human access.

Mayor Little spoke about her recent discussion with the CME developers, the City of Langford and the Sc'ianew First Nation, where there was discussion about the residential development. The homes built nearest the Buffer Land would likely require retaining walls required to address the elevation challenges in certain parts of the area. These would effectively serve as fences. It would be good to have the developers brief Council.

Nicole Shukin mentioned that zoning the Buffer Land as park may be a complicated option in light of greenspace obligations for the residential development.

Discussion occurred about past references to covenants related to greenspace in Metchosin related to the residential subdivision. Councillor Shukin stated that he has reviewed the covenants on title with the Buffer Land and that he has not seen anything indicating a right of access for park or recreational use in favour of any external party. However, he felt that managing access to the Buffer Land needs to be done as part of a broader conservation strategy, rather than as an effort to exclude people. He raised the idea of a "Friends of the Buffer Land" group to support conservation action.

Pattie Whitehouse asked if there was a way of collaborating with other rural communities about broader health benefits of greenspace and wild areas, in terms of the residents of the larger region. Need to emphasize that there is a broader value in preserving rural/wildland areas. She cautioned against insular thinking.

Kathy Saluke pointed out how residents living in the area around Centre Mountain have been facing sounds of blasting and machinery operations for several years now. This regularly occurs on Saturdays. There have been examples where rocks have blown into a neighbour's yard. She also worried about how the blasting would be impacting groundwater in the area. She noted that there are hundreds of wells that draw from that Aquifer 606. Efforts should be undertaken to address this with Langford.

The WG reflected on the key themes heard during the evening:

- Protect environmental values: local stewardship, ecological restoration and habitat protect, fire protection.
- The covenant and easement allowing for stormwater detention ponds was of concern.
- Need to learn more about the CME development.
- Rezoning: explore the best zone to support conservation, explore covenants to strengthen environmental protection, consider an Environmental Protection Area (EPA).
- Manage access: there was agreement that the Buffer Land not be utilized as an open park.

The meeting ended at 8:54pm.

District of Metchosin

Minutes
Buffer Land Working Group
May 17, 2023 at 7:00 PM
Council Chambers
Metchosin Municipal Hall

Present: Councillor Jay Shukin (Chair), Councillor Shelly Donaldson (Vice-Chair), Brian Grant, Richard Simpson Bailey Spiteri

Regrets: Bonnie Bouveur, Anna Hall, Karen Hoffman, Gary Smirfitt.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm

1. Agenda, Additions, Approval

Jay called the meeting to order. He welcomed Brian Grant, who was attending his first meeting. Brian introduced himself, noting his experience as a geologist and in working with stakeholder groups.

2. Public Participation

Sherry Davies asked for confirmation on the location of the main entrance. Discussed concerns about the residential development in Langford and future impacts.

Tamara Ballard for background on the composition of the Working Group. Questions were also raised about the difference between a working group and the advisory select committees Councillor Donaldson noted the representation from the Neild Road area, the District's Advisory Groups and the broader community. She noted that working groups are generally focused on a specific task, where advisory groups have a broader mandate. Both groups report back to Council.

Mike Ballard noted the importance of the stormwater system being effective in terms of managing pollutants. He mentioned recent findings about tire residue impacting the health of salmon populations.

3. Adoption of Minutes

The minutes of April 20, 2023 Working Group meeting were presented for adoption. Carried

4. Reports

Discussion occurred of the May 9, 2023 community input meeting. Key themes from the community input session:

- Importance of environmental protection.
- Consideration of a new zone, which could support conservation goals.
- Little support for CRD involvement.
- Concern over stormwater detention ponds being put into the Buffer.

Jay noted that formal minutes of the session will be coming for the Group's review.

5. New Business

Discussed better defining "greenspace buffer." Brian provided a definition:

> The buffer lands will remain a greenspace that conserves the area's ecosystem, protects the water quality in the Bilston Creek watershed, and allows an enjoyable outdoor experience for a limited number of users. The lands will be managed effectively with a strategic and operational plans that maintain and inspire environmental stewardship even with the future increases in nearby population density.

There was discussion on this. Bailey indicated that she would also work on a definition.

The concept tracking table was reviewed. Bailey suggested that the evaluation criteria be built directly into the rows where each concept would be considered and develop a ranking system. Jay will revise the table and circulate for comment ahead of our next meeting. The evaluation criteria in the working group's terms of reference include: Neighbour impacts; Financial impacts; Practicality / Feasibility; Legal and land use considerations, other criteria as determined by the Working Group.

Based on the revised table being acceptable, there was discussion about starting the work of identifying and evaluating concepts at our next meeting.

The group discussed evaluating options that we don't necessarily favour. There was general agreement that the Working Group's effort would be incomplete or biased toward a certain outcome if we did not consider a broad range of options.

Tuesday, June 6th was put forward. Jay to confirm this date and the time.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45pm.

Concept & Background	Advantages (Pros)	Disadvantages (Cons)	Additional Comment	Overall Assessment	
Concept descriptor General description and background here.	• Bullets on the attributes, benefits.	• Bullets on the disadvantages •	General discussion	Environmental Protection	
				Neighbour impacts	
				Fiscal Impacts	
				Practicality / Feasibility	
				Land Use Complexities	
				Community Input (consistent/inconsistent)	
				Total	