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Council considers Snug Cove Master Plan

Bowen Island, BC - A blueprint for Snug Cove may soon be guiding decisions by Council and the municipality. Earlier this month, in a majority vote, Council agreed that the Snug Cove Master Plan should be used as a reference document. While not binding, Council acknowledged the possibility that the plan, or sections of it, may be adopted as policy if and when it gains community support. Council instructed staff to write a resolution that the "Snug Cove Master Plan be utilized as a reference document regarding all decision making pertaining to Snug Cove."

This decision came after a discussion on various topics concerning planning for Snug Cove. At the same meeting, Council asked staff for an assessment matrix to help them determine the future of civic-owned properties known as the surplus lands. Elected officials also instructed staff to "develop a critical path" as to how the municipality can achieve Phase I of a ferry marshalling strategy – reconfiguring of the ferry "gateway" from Cardena Road and Government Road intersection to the ferry ramp – as outlined in the master plan.

"What have we done here tonight?" Mayor Bob Turner asked at the committee of the whole meeting. "We are test driving the plan," he said.

"This is a useful way to apply it immediately, by charting small but important steps", and by "continually referencing and referring to it. This is a very useful document in framing our discussions," he concluded.

Consultants who created the comprehensive Snug Cove Master Plan presented their document to the public at a meeting in late January. The team, lead by Alan Boniface, began their work in July of last year. Their study and resulting 150-page report proposes a framework for an "Eco-Village in the Park." Guided by a sustainability lens, it envisions a thriving centre situated in and around the cove that features a mix of commercial and residential buildings, civic facilities and services, parkland and green space and an attractive and efficient transportation corridor, said Boniface.

In introducing the plan, he remarked that it was a "juggling act of huge proportions" attempting to balance the wide range of private, commercial and community interests as they pertain to ferry marshalling, the surplus lands and civic facilities.

The consultant, who is a resident of the island, emphasized that the plan was designed to reflect "exemplary sustainability", with the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions as a prime goal. It is predicated on the eight pillars of sustainability, which speak to land use, transportation, infrastructure, buildings, open space, economic and social development and food systems.

Consultants analyzed a host of policies, reports and studies, held public meetings and met with numerous stakeholders over the past few months. They attempted to consolidate sometimes-opposing views. And they did not balk at peppering their plan with bold initiatives that could affect significant change for the entire island.

Densification of the Cove, with pedestrian-access as a priority, is coupled with retaining the natural environment,

resulting in "fingers" of development along major streets. "We believe strongly that concentrating people, jobs and activities together is great for community building but also the most sustainable approach," said Boniface. It's also a way to help reduce the entire island's carbon footprint, say the consultants.

Both members of the public and members of council have expressed concern about increasing density in Snug Cove Village and the impact that it would have on figures projected in the Official Community Plan. In partially addressing this, the Master Plan recommends that further development outside of the Cove should be limited and perhaps eventually curbed. The municipality could consider downsizing zoning of properties; creating opportunities for density transfers and enhancing land values in the Cove, suggested Boniface.

A video of the full presentation of the plan that took place on January 24 can be viewed online by clicking on the "Watch the Video Presentation" link.

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