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News Release

Public Input Sought for Sooke Financial Plan

Sooke, BC – November 17, 2009

Residents of the District of Sooke will have their first opportunity to provide input into the preparation of the community's five-year financial plan during a public Town Hall meeting to be held at the Sooke Community Hall on Monday, November 30th.

The 2010-2014 Financial Plan will provide a framework which, when combined with the Sooke Town Centre Plan and draft Official Community Plan, will guide the District for the next five years.

"While the preparation of a financial plan may seem like a whole lot of numbers, the final outcome provides important and exciting direction to Council and staff," Director of Finance Dave Devana explained. "Notwithstanding all the great accomplishments of the past 10 years since incorporation, this financial plan may be the most important as we develop financial strategies to implement the overall vision provided in the Sooke Town Centre Plan and draft OCP."

The financial plan will be developed over the next few months, with the public invited to attend and provide input. To help the District move forward toward a financially sustainable future, a number of key issues will be considered including:

- 1) What level of property taxes are citizens prepared to pay, while at the same time recognizing that services levels directly impact taxation levels?
 - 2) How will targeted higher density growth in the Sooke Town Centre (and other growth nodes) reduce the overall tax burden on the residential tax base?
 - 3) Given the anticipated growth in the Sooke Town Centre, what road projects identified in the Transportation Master Plan must be completed in the next five years to reduce traffic congestion, and most importantly how will these projects be financed and by whom?
 - 4) Given the Sooke Town Centre Plan recommends a new main street linking Sooke Road and the Sooke Basin, how and when will this road be constructed, and by whom?
 - 5) In accordance with the Parks and Trails Master Plan, what parks and trails projects should be completed (e.g. Galloping Goose Trail connection to Sooke Town Centre, boardwalk expansion, etc.)?
 - 6) How will the District's municipal operations meet the obligation to be carbon neutral by 2012, and more importantly, how will the community reduce its carbon emissions by 33% by 2020?
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“There is no question that transportation issues will be highlighted in the 2010 – 2014 Financial Plan,” Devana said. “Council will need to consider the merits of how to complete segments of the ‘alternative connector’ between Grant Road and Phillips Road to enable residents to travel between Grant and Phillips Road without the use of Sooke Road.

“Council will also be considering how and when to allocate Road Development Costs Charges, which are collected from the development community, to this key transportation link.”

The District of Sooke continues to build on the success of previous advancements. The completion in 2006 of the sanitary wastewater treatment facility and distribution system with the assistance of an \$8.8 million grant made Sooke the first municipality in the Capital Regional District to provide secondary treatment to its wastewater. The main priority of this system was to clean and protect the marine environment in the Sooke Harbour and Basin but it has also allowed for growth to be targeted to areas like the Sooke Town Centre. The completion of the system was the catalyst that made the vision of the Sooke Town Centre Plan and draft OCP possible.

“In addition to the five year plan Council will adopt, Sooke is going to experience some exciting change over the next year with major new projects coming to the community,” Devana said. “The construction of the Prestige Hotel and Conference Centre has begun, and Phase One of the Mariner’s Village Development is expected in the spring of 2010.”

Mariner’s Village is a 12-acre waterfront mixed-use development in the Sooke Town Centre with up to 475 residential dwelling units (condos and townhouses), a further 10,000 square meters of commercial space and a 170-slip marina. It is comprised of a number of properties located in the 6500-block of Sooke Road.

“This new development will enhance our diverse local business community,” Devana explained. “Our goal is to continue to encourage commercial and industrial businesses to locate their operations in Sooke through incentive programs and innovative ventures. Development and increases in the commercial tax base will provide funding for improved road networks, acquiring trails and open spaces, including further waterfront trail connections, revitalizing the downtown, providing affordable housing and implementing sustainability policies. “

The District of Sooke is encouraging its residents to come out and participate in the development of the 2010-2014 Financial Plan. The next opportunity will be at the Sooke Town Hall Meeting, Monday, November 30, 2009 from 4-8 p.m. at the Sooke Community Hall.

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