

DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC VISION FOR OTTER POINT, SHIRLEY & JORDAN RIVER

INFORMATION BULLETIN No. 8 – MARCH, 2008

**Economic Development – Recreation – Land Use – Community Services
Taxation – Community Development – Governance – The Environment**

Welcome to the eight **Information Bulletin** for the Developing a Strategic Vision project. These regular bulletins will keep you informed of the activities taking place in our community as we work towards the development of a strategic vision for the communities of Otter Point, Shirley & Jordan River.

This Information Bulletin is now being distributed by e-mail to about 200 individuals, organizations and businesses in the Otter Point, Shirley and Jordan River area. You can receive this **Information Bulletin** by contacting Arnie Campbell @ d.acampbell@shaw.ca.

1. SUMMARY OF THE SPEAKERS COMMENTS AT THE FORUM ON GOVERNANCE OPTIONS FOR OTTER POINT & SHIRLEY

This forum, held on February 19, concluded the series of public information events; the first stage of the Developing a Strategic Vision Project.

Linda Allen, professional planner and co-principal of Cityspaces Consulting Ltd.:
“Governance & Community Change”

Governance is the fundamental means by which elected officials connect the public with the entity they represent. Unincorporated areas often face a conundrum as to how to provide affordable, appropriate local governance. Local governance is complex and controversial. It is about: reliable, affordable property services; consistent, enforced regulations; a long-term sustainable vision; and fair and transparent decision making. These diverse elements, however, are prioritized differently by every property owner and every resident.

Many unincorporated settlements across BC are facing common challenges: increased growth pressures, inadequate or failing services, changing demographic patterns, insufficient local authority to prevent poor land use decisions; and subdivision decisions made by the Ministry of Highways. And while incorporation is often seen as an option for greater local control, perceptions are that it can also lead to higher property taxes, too much regulation, insufficient non-residential property assessment, more administration, and no guarantees of better value.

Noting that it is always useful to learn from others' experiences, Ms. Allen went on to describe six BC communities – three currently examining incorporation and three recently incorporated – and some of the issues they are facing. She concluded with advice on how to proceed with decisions about local governance:

- Prioritize community values.
- Identify and clarify major issues.
- Undertake homework.
- Identify and clarify trade-offs.
- Consider future sustainability (financial, ecological, social-cultural).
- Enjoy the trip.

Alison Habkirk, professional planner, adjunct professor with the University of Victoria School of Public Administration, and program manager for the Local Government Leadership Academy: **“Governance Options for Otter Point & Shirley”**

The more people know about how their government works, the better off their community will be.

Local government is not always rational, and it is often messy. Its two key roles are political representation and service delivery. Each role is important but different, and communities should decide on the relative importance of each.

Three governance options exist for Otter Point and Shirley: maintaining the status quo; incorporation as a municipality; and status quo plus. The status quo involves staying in the electoral area, which has: one elected regional director; an elected land use committee; an elected advisory planning committee; and three CRD Board members who make land use decisions. Advantages of this option include likely receipt of a significant CRD subsidy for services, access to a large CRD administrative organization with extensive technical expertise, and community representation beyond the electoral area director through the elected Land Use Committee and the district advisory planning committees. Disadvantages include limited local political representation and political authority residing in the CRD.

The second option, incorporation, would mean having an elected council, likely being a defined subset of the electoral area, and having advisory committees. The major advantages of incorporation are broader local representation and greater autonomy and independence. The major disadvantages are likely higher taxes and more responsibility for local decision making.

Option three, the status quo within the electoral area but with community service commissions, would see land use planning and decisions remaining the responsibility of the CRD with the management of other local services possibly

delegated through a CRD bylaw to one or more elected community commissions. Advantages would include broader representation through community service commissions and providing valuable experience for potential future incorporation. Disadvantages include higher costs and increased governance complexity.

Ms. Habkirk concluded her presentation by noting several important questions that a community needs to consider about governance options:

- Does it want better representation or improved/more consolidated management of services?
- What is possible?
- How likely is it that the status quo will continue?
- What is the likelihood of incorporation?
- What are the local politics around establishing community service commissions?

Joe Martignago, Chief Administrative Officer for the District of Metchosin: “**The Municipal Experience.**” (Note: unexpected circumstances prevented Mr. Martignago’s attendance at the forum. The following is based on a conversation he subsequently had with some members of the Steering Committee.)

Metchosin was incorporated in 1984, with a population of about 3,500. It currently has no debt and approximately \$4 million in the bank. It had a \$100,000 budget surplus in 2007 and has the second lowest tax rate in the area.

Incorporating gives local residents greater control of land use decisions. Eighty to 90% of the municipality’s decisions deal with land use issues, which cannot be delegated by a municipal council. A municipality is not required to provide lots of services, and because Metchosin does not, its taxes are low

Metchosin invests its recreation budget into it’s the trail systems. It has an active Parks & Trails Committee, with a master plan. This committee is consulted on all municipal land use decisions. Metchosin owns the trail system and spends about \$10,000 annually on signage and repair. Metchosin has no covered recreational facilities, but it has a cricket pitch, a bike park, a school soccer field, a ball diamond, a tennis court and a field. All are maintained by volunteers.

Residents of Metchosin pay for common regional services including the CRD library levy, CRD recreation levy, police services, health capital construction levies, and school board services.

Metchosin runs a virtual city hall with a CEO and 4 full time clerks keeping track of documentation, finances, paper work and enquiries. Metchosin contracts with the CRD for enforcement of its animal control bylaw. It employs a building inspector 4 days a week, a planner 1 day a week an accountant 3 days a month and a roads supervisor who comes in only as required. All other services are contracted out on a pay for, as used basis.

Metchosin wants to stay rural. It does not want to give priority to looking after the needs of the developers. Metchosin does not have a lot of staff so each development application waits its turn, even if it takes an inordinate amount of time to get approval. Every elected council has to make this decision to stay rural. Council needs to be strong - to say "Sorry I don't care - I want to stay rural."

Metchosin's Official Community Plan is 15 years old and it is the key document for the municipality. What a community wants has to be in these documents. It has to be carefully written and legally defensible. It takes about two years to write

The OCP is the document and everyone has that message: citizen's councilors', staff, developers and people moving into the area. The trick to preserving Metchosin's rural values is to stick to its OCP

Metchosin works because it has an active and engaged citizenry. They are involved in all areas of community

2. NEXT STEPS

Phase two of the project will be the community participation workshops to be held on Saturday morning April 5th and 19th at the Otter Point Fire Hall. **This is the really, really important part and needs broad community participation.**

Both workshops will run from 9:30 am to 12:30 pm.

Participants are expected to be able to attend both workshops and registration will be limited to 50. For further information about the workshops and to register, contact Wayne Fritz at 642-0440 or e-mail WLFRTZ@SHAW.CA.

Once the participants at the community workshops have completed their draft of the Vision report, the Steering Committee will then begin the task of assembling the final report. The intent is to circulate a first draft through the community, for comment, in May and a second draft in June. The final report will then be finalized over the summer, printed then made available as a public document by September.

3. RESULTS OF THE STRAW POLL

A "straw poll" was circulated at the June 19, 2007 Rural Land Use Forum, the October 02, 2007 Economic Development & Community Change Forum, the November 27, 2007 Water – Environment – Change Forum and most recently at the February 19th Governance Forum, asking audience members to check which of the following theme areas they felt were most important. Although the results were informative and helpful, the survey tool was not designed well enough for

the results to be conclusive. Supporting information is needed. The survey will be slightly modified and used at each public event to monitor whether the perceived importance of these theme areas changes over time.

Question: The Developing a Strategic Vision project will be looking at a number of theme areas over the next year. Help us out by checking the ones that you feel are most important to our local area. Have we missed any?

VISION PROJECT - STRAW POLLS THEMES

	June	October	November	February
<u>Forum Topic:</u>	<u>Land Use</u>	<u>Ec. Dev.</u>	<u>Env. & H2O</u>	<u>Governance</u>
Rural land Use:	35	51	23	30
Economic Development:	19	46	6	10
The Environment:	31	53	19	23
Governance:	26	43	13	28
Community Services:	19	49	6	22
Recreation:	20	31	14	19
Taxation:	17	29	4	16
Transportation:	16	54	10	12
Other: Cell Phone Access	7			
Wild Life Protect.	5			
Coming Together	1			
Social Planning	5			
Infrastructure	3			
Beach Access	2			
Agriculture	1			
Slow Growth	1			
Affordable Housing	7			
Public Participation	1			

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Developing a Strategic Vision project wishes to acknowledge the following supporters:

Juan de Fuca Electoral Area Regional Director - \$1,000 grant.
Juan de Fuca Economic Development Commission - \$2,000 grant.
Real Estate Foundation of BC - \$5,000 grant.
Otter Point Fire Department – meeting space.
SEAPARC Parks & Recreation Commission – meeting space.
Sooke Region Museum – meeting space.
CRD Planning & Regional Planning Services – CRD information access.
John Horgan MLA – provincial information access
A Point-of-View B&B – Guest Accommodation
Tugwell Creek Honey Farm & Meadery – Presentation Gifts

9. WHAT IS A STRATEGIC COMMUNITY VISION?

A strategic community vision is a document that outlines the major goals that a community sets for itself for a 5 -15-year period and identifies key strategies for achieving those goals.

The community goals normally reflect the community's priorities and can focus on diverse issues including: governance, land use, recreation (e.g. parks and trails), community services (e.g. water, fire protection, communications, transportation and roads), taxation, economic development, community development and environmental preservation.

The strategies to achieve such goals are generally broad and inclusive, link to a wide range of groups and organizations both within and outside the community, and may include timeframes for initiating certain activities.

In some respects, the process of developing a strategic community vision can be more important than the document developed, if it brings community residents, businesses, groups and elected leaders together in a process to clarify what they want for their community and how to pursue those goals.