

Gibsons Council Observations – Feb. 17, 2009

The agenda for last night's meeting of Gibsons Council <http://www.gowebtide.com/gibsonsddocuments/090217CouncilAgenda.pdf> did not appear imposing, which may explain why the gallery comprised only seven people, a number fewer than the total of Mayor, Councillors, staff and media present.

Following approval of minutes and the bi-weekly action checklist, Council approved two recommendations from the Planning Committee, the first dealing with a Development Variance Permit Application related to subdivision in the Upper Gibsons Neighbourhood Plan area, and the second related to the Harbour Area planning exercise. The latter item had taken nearly four hours in Planning Committee, which staff had distilled into nine points of background information which will guide staff in developing a budget, time frame, and next steps (including a public engagement process) for presentation to the next Planning Committee meeting on March 10.

The Harbour Area planning exercise will be a major focus of the Town's attention this year. ICET has already given first stage approval to the Harbour Authority's plans for expansion, and the federal "stimulus" package includes funds for small craft harbours through DFO. The expansion of the working and recreational harbour facilities has already been viewed favourably by the Town (as evidenced by its support of the Harbour Authority's ICET application), and the planning context to support the expansion needs to be done expeditiously to ensure that Gibsons can avail itself of all possible funding support from senior levels of government. In addition, the planning context needs to be established so that the community can avoid the kind of conflict that the Shoal Bay exercise created last year.

Council made a couple of appointments:

- Councillor Curry (Councillor Johnson as Alternate) to the Sea to Sky Air Quality Coordinating Committee
- Councillor Koopmans (Mayor Janyk as Alternate) to the SCRD's Emergency Executive Committee

Council also authorized the Town's Engineering Technologist to attend a BCIT Public Works Inspection course

Council dealt with a number of items of correspondence:

- Support for the Gibsons Public Art Gallery's application for funding from the Canada Summer Jobs Program
- The upcoming UBCM Executive Committee Meetings (Councillor Curry noted that Mayor Janyk is Vice Chair of the Community Economic Development Committee and a member of the First Nations Committee)
- AVICC's (Association of Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities) Forestry Forum April 3
- BC Housing's Rental Assistance Program
- BC Law and Citizenship Curriculum Project (civics for secondary school students)
 - In this context, CAO Gipps noted that he will be attending the Career Fair at Chatelech Secondary School on March 6
 - Councillor Rowe suggested that Corporate Officer Jansson be the Town's contact on this file, and volunteered that he will participate fully
- Route 101 Safety Society's submission that the Highway 101 Bypass (from Langdale to Sechelt) should be an important issue in the upcoming Provincial Election
 - The Town suggests that the Society attend the meetings of the SCRD's Transportation Committee

Mayor Janyk, having opened the meeting with the declaration that the Town would be open, honest and transparent in dealing with what he referred to as the "economic Tsunami", closed with a report on a meeting held earlier in the day at which MP John Weston briefed local government people on the "stimulus package" contained in the federal budget. Apparently the principles the feds are following are:

- Immediate
- Incremental
- Rehabilitation (of infrastructure)

Mayor Janyk pointed out some apparent inconsistencies in the federal approach that need to be clarified, for example, immediate means "shovel ready", but incremental means "not already in your budget". This can be a problem, for if a community is ready to go on a project, planning for the project will have been going on, including providing for the project in upcoming budgets. Disqualifying projects because they are in budgets going forward will not be helpful. Another potential difficulty is that while the feds will match up to 50% on infrastructure projects, the evaluation process will be competitive. The less a community needs to rely on federal support it is suggested, the more likely its application is to

succeed. This can be a problem for communities which have maximized their ability to take on debt. It is not clear following Weston's briefing how the Town will be able to qualify for federal funds provided in the new budget.

Sticking to the theme of the "economic tsunami" (the Mayor used the term a number of times), he noted that he had met with HSP&P (Howe Sound Pulp & Paper) earlier in the day, and that while he couldn't reveal the contents of the discussion, there are issues with the kraft pulp markets. Three hundred people are involved in the production of pulp at the mill. Both the company and the union will have to be innovative, the Mayor stated.

On a positive note, Mayor Janyk reported that there is good collaboration amongst Regional District Directors and cooperation from the staff in dealing with the toughest budget he has seen in ten years. Mayor Janyk also reported that the board of ICET meets this Friday to respond to the economic changes of the past four months. Asked if the Board would change the matching formula for the Sunshine Coast (currently at 3 to 1) the Mayor, who is also Chair of ICET, said that the Board's response would be rational and would likely rely on the advice of the consultant who did the original work on the matching formula. He noted that changing the formula could cause problems for those whose funding agreements are in place under the former formula. ICET's decision will affect a number of projects currently being developed in the Coast.

Following a number of questions from the Coast Reporter, the answers to which we can all read on Friday, the efficient meeting concluded at 7:59 pm.

Hammy McClymont