

3. Special Committee of the Whole meeting of March 6, 2025 – Financial Plan.

DISTRICT OF SAANICH
MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING
HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBERS
SAANICH MUNICIPAL HALL, 770 VERNON AVENUE
THURSDAY, MARCH 6, 2025 AT 6:01 P.M.

Chair: Mayor Murdock

Council: Councillors Brice, Brownoff, Chambers, de Vries, Harper, Phelps Bondaroff, Plant and Westhaver

Staff: Brent Reems, Chief Administrative Officer; Dean Duthie, Chief Constable; Michael Kaye, Saanich Fire Chief; Sheila Allen, Director of Corporate Services; Paul Arslan, Director of Finance; Angila Bains, Director of Legislative and Protective Services/Corporate Officer; Lindsay Chase, Director of Planning; Joanne Ko, Director of Finance and Procurement (Police) (via Teams); Harley Machielse, Director of Engineering; Suzanne Samborski, Director of Parks, Recreation and Community Services; Cristina Caravaca, Senior Manager of Community Services; Jennifer Lockhart, Senior Manager of Financial Services; Carroll Porter, Senior Manager of Human Resources; Tiana Solares, Senior Manager of Recreation; David Sparanese, Senior Manager of Public Works (via Teams); Cameron Scott, Manager of Community Planning; Maggie Baynham, Sustainability Project Manager (via Teams); Chris Fletcher, Manager of IT – Solutions Delivery; Cindy Mao, Manager of Risk Services; Janet Racz, Real Estate Services Manager; Sharon Froud, Deputy Corporate Officer (via Teams); and Tara Da Silva, Senior Committee Clerk

A. PUBLIC INPUT ON BUSINESS ITEMS

M. Najari, Leeds Place

Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary

- Questions if Swan Lake management has expressed concern with the Quadra McKenzie Plan (QMP) and the proposed impact of cumulative development on the lake.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE BUSINESS ITEMS

5280-20
2025 Budget

GREATER VICTORIA PUBLIC LIBRARY (GVPL) 2025 BUDGET PRESENTATION

Presentation by the Greater Victoria Public Library CEO and Board Vice-Chair.

To present the 2025 GVPL Budget.

D. Cavens and M. Sawa, Greater Victoria Public Library Board (GVPLB) presented the 2025 GVPLB Budget (PowerPoint on file) and answered questions from Council as follows:

- Libraries are open to the public and everyone is welcome to attend; staff work to ensure libraries are safe and secure for all residents.
- The estimated amortization expense for tangible capital assets is added back into the budgeted annual surplus and does vary year over year depending on capital asset purchases and disposals.
- Provincial funding has remained static for many years.
- In the past, the GVPLB has attended the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) and Association of Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities (AVICC) annual meetings in an effort to raise its profile.

- The Emily Carr Library Branch had the largest number of new library cards issued in 2024.

MOVED by Councillor Westhaver and Seconded by Councillor Chambers: “That it be recommended that Council receive the presentation of the Greater Victoria Public Library Board for information.”

RESULT: Carried 9 TO 0

IN FAVOUR: Murdock, Brice, Brownoff, Chambers, de Vries, Harper, Phelps Bondaroff, Plant, Westhaver

OPPOSED: None

5280-20
2025 Budget

SWAN LAKE CHRISTMAS HILL NATURE SANCTUARY PRESENTATION

Presentation from the Executive Director, Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary Society.

C. Gibson and S. Daly, Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary Society presented the Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary (PowerPoint on file).

MOVED by Councillor Chambers and Seconded by Councillor Brownoff: “That it be recommended that Council receive the presentation of the Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary for information.”

In response to questions from Council, the presenters stated:

- Staff are in collaboration with a local organization in developing a fundraising strategic plan that involves selling carbon credits for wetlands.
- Swan Lake has a contract with the Capital Regional District (CRD) to offer plant workshops.
- There is a need to create a strategy to conserve urban diversity.
- A Density Impact Fund could help with smaller projects such as cleaning up debris.

Council discussion ensued with the following comments:

- Swan Lake has activities that reconnects residents to the land.
- The addition of interpretive signs is appreciated.

RESULT: Carried 9 TO 0

IN FAVOUR: Murdock, Brice, Brownoff, Chambers, de Vries, Harper, Phelps Bondaroff, Plant, Westhaver

OPPOSED: None

5280-20
2025 Budget

5660-40
Swan Lake
Management
Contract

2025 SWAN LAKE CHRISTMAS HILL NATURE SANCTUARY CONTRACT

Report of the Director of Finance dated February 24, 2025.

To present the Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary's 2025 budget requests consisting of a 12% increase to the annual management fees and a one-time capital funding request for \$285,200 for bridge repairs and replacements, protective fencing and automatic parking lot gates and doors.

The Director of Finance stated:

- The Society can come forward on an annual basis to request an increase in management fees.
- Capital works identified in the request can be considered as one-time requests.

MOVED by Councillor Harper and Seconded by Mayor Murdock: "That it be recommended that Council not approve the request for an increase to the Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary management fee and retain it at \$457,250."

Council discussion ensued with the following comments:

- A 12% increase in fees is not appropriate.
- Grant increases are typically in the range of 2.5%.
- With the cumulative amount of rapid development in the area, biodiversity needs to be protected.
- Although supporting the Nature Sanctuary is appropriate, there are increased demands on budget that may limit the amount of an increase.

In response to questions from Council, the Director of Finance stated:

- It is up to Council to decide how surplus funds are used.
- Other organizations have five-year funding agreements with Saanich.
- The Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary Society has a management agreement with Saanich with a different funding mechanism; they can request increases on an annual basis.

Councillor Chambers exited the meeting at 7:19 p.m.

MOVED by Councillor Plant and Seconded by Councillor de Vries: "That debate be closed and the question called immediately."

RESULT (CALL THE QUESTION): Carried 8 TO 0

IN FAVOUR: Murdock, Brice, Brownoff, de Vries, Harper, Phelps Bondaroff, Plant, Westhaver

OPPOSED: None

ABSENT: Chambers

Councillor Chambers returned to the meeting at 7:24 p.m.

RESULT (MAIN MOTION): Failed 2 TO 7**IN FAVOUR:** Murdock, Harper**OPPOSED:** Brice, Brownoff, Chambers, de Vries, Phelps Bondaroff, Plant, Westhaver

MOVED by Councillor Phelps Bondaroff and Seconded by Councillor Chambers: “That it be recommended that Council approve a 6% increase to the Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary management fee, increasing it to \$484,685.”

Council discussion ensued with the following comments:

- A 6% increase will ensure that Indigenous Reconciliation support and maintenance are covered.

In response to questions from Council, the CAO stated:

- The Official Community Plan was drafted in anticipation of and support of the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and the Urban Forest Strategy.

The Mayor ruled that he did not believe that the motion could be amended to change the percentage increase. The question was put, “shall the chair be sustained?”

MOVED by Councillor de Vries and Seconded by Councillor Chambers: “Shall the Chair be sustained.”

RESULT (SHALL THE CHAIR BE SUSTAINED): Failed 4 TO 5**IN FAVOUR:** Murdock, Brice, Brownoff, Westhaver**OPPOSED:** Chambers, de Vries, Harper, Phelps Bondaroff, Plant

MOVED by Councillor de Vries and Seconded by Councillor Chambers: “That it be recommended that the motion be amended to: a “4% increase for a total of \$475,550.”

Council discussion ensued with the following comments:

- There is a need for budget restraint while meeting critical capacity needs.
- There may be opportunities for efficiencies.
- The focus on Indigenous Reconciliation and maintenance is supportable.
- A policy that outlines what are appropriate increases on a year-to-year basis should be considered.

MOVED by Councillor Plant and Seconded by Councillor Westhaver: “That debate be closed and the question called.”

RESULT (CALL THE QUESTION): Carried 8 TO 1**IN FAVOUR:** Murdock, Brice, Brownoff, Chambers, de Vries, Harper, Plant, Westhaver**OPPOSED:** Phelps Bondaroff

RESULT (AMENDMENT): Carried 9 TO 0

IN FAVOUR: Murdock, Brice, Brownoff, Chambers, de Vries, Harper, Phelps Bondaroff, Plant, Westhaver

OPPOSED: None

RESULT (MAIN MOTION, AS AMENDED): Carried 9 TO 0

IN FAVOUR: Murdock, Brice, Brownoff, Chambers, de Vries, Harper, Phelps Bondaroff, Plant, Westhaver

OPPOSED: None

Main Motion, as Amended:

“That it be recommended that Council approve a 4% increase to the Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary management fee, increasing it to \$475,550.”

MOVED by Councillor Plant and Seconded by Councillor Chambers: “That it be recommended that Council refer the topic of Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary management fee and potential funding options to the Finance and Governance Standing Committee.”

Council discussion ensued with the following comments:

- The Standing Committee could consider options on how to ensure the Nature Sanctuary has sustainable funding that is predictable for the future.

RESULT: Carried 9 TO 0

IN FAVOUR: Murdock, Brice, Brownoff, Chambers, de Vries, Harper, Phelps Bondaroff, Plant, Westhaver

OPPOSED: None

BUDGET DELIBERATIONS

MOVED by Councillor Brice and Seconded by Councillor Plant: “That it be recommended that Council implement the following budget reductions adding to 0.94% reduction in tax requirement:

- Delay Accelerated Active Transportation Plan (AATP) capital funding transition to taxation from borrowing of \$500,000 (0.28% reduction in tax requirement).
- Defer funding addition of \$300,000 for Park Acquisition (0.17% reduction in tax requirement).
- Reduce the Police Board budget by \$160,600 (0.09% reduction in tax requirement).
- Reduce capital funding by \$614,400 (0.35% reduction in tax requirement).
- Reduce various IT software licensing and maintenance program costs by \$69,200 (0.04% reduction in tax requirement).”

Council discussion ensued with the following comments:

- The reductions may result in a budget increase that the public may understand and accept.

MOVED by Councillor Plant and Seconded by Councillor Chambers: “That it be recommended that the motion be amended to delete the bullet to reduce the Police Board budget.”

Council discussion ensued with the following comments:

- Given the increasing mental health aspects in policing, there is a need for the two mental health co-response officers.
- These positions may create efficiencies for the Police Department.
- The Police Board could find the money from elsewhere in the budget to fund these positions.

In response to questions from Council, the Director of Finance and the Chief Constable stated:

- The inclusion of the 0.09% for the Police Board budget would result in an estimated tax increase of 8.04%.
- The two officers would be hired mid-2025; the positions would need to be fully funded in 2026.
- The Police Board decides what funds would be used for.
- If the funds are not received, the co-response team will not be realized in 2025.

RESULT (AMENDMENT): Failed 3 TO 6

IN FAVOUR: Chambers, Plant, Westhaver

OPPOSED: Murdock, Brice, Brownoff, de Vries, Harper, Phelps Bondaroff

MOVED by Councillor de Vries and Seconded by Councillor Phelps Bondaroff: “That it be recommended that the motion be amended that that Police budget be capped at 9.23%.”

Council discussion ensued with the following comments:

- A double digit increase is untenable in the current financial climate.
- This shows a commitment to providing additional resources while showing some financial constraint.
- It is important to make appropriate adjustments to the budget moving forward.
- More engagement with the Police Department could be considered to ensure expectations are aligned.

MOVED by Councillor Plant and Seconded by Councillor Chambers: “That debate be closed and the question called.”

RESULT (CALL THE QUESTION): Carried 6 TO 3

IN FAVOUR: Brice, Brownoff, Chambers, Harper, Plant, Westhaver

OPPOSED: Murdock, de Vries, Phelps Bondaroff

RESULT (AMENDMENT): Failed 1 TO 8**IN FAVOUR:** de Vries**OPPOSED:** Murdock, Brice, Brownoff, Chambers, Harper, Phelps Bondaroff, Plant, Westhaver

Council discussion ensued with the following comments:

- The Police Department increase is the single biggest cost driver of the total budget.
- It is recognized that there are external costs outside of our control that impacts the cost of policing.
- The efficiency report is appreciated; it helps residents understand what is being done to keep costs down.
- It is important to maintain the current service levels.

MOVED by Councillor Plant and Seconded by Councillor de Vries: “That debate be closed and the question be called.”

RESULT (CALL THE QUESTION): Carried 8 TO 1**IN FAVOUR:** Murdock, Brice, Brownoff, Chambers, de Vries, Harper, Plant, Westhaver**OPPOSED:** Phelps Bondaroff

It was the consensus of Council to consider each bullet point in the motion in seriatim.

MOVED by Councillor Brice and Seconded by Councillor Plant: “Delay Accelerated Active Transportation Plan (AATP) capital funding transition to taxation from borrowing of \$500,000 (0.28% reduction in tax requirement).”

RESULT (MAIN MOTION): Carried 9 TO 0**IN FAVOUR:** Murdock, Brice, Brownoff, Chambers, de Vries, Harper, Phelps Bondaroff, Plant, Westhaver**OPPOSED:** None

MOVED by Councillor Brice and Seconded by Councillor Plant: “Defer funding addition of \$300,000 for Park Acquisition (0.17% reduction in tax requirement).”

RESULT (MAIN MOTION): 8 TO 1**IN FAVOUR:** Murdock, Brice, Brownoff, Chambers, Harper, Phelps Bondaroff, Plant, Westhaver**OPPOSED:** de Vries

MOVED by Councillor Brice and Seconded by Councillor Plant: “Reduce the Police Board budget by \$160,600 (0.09% reduction in tax requirement).”

RESULT (MAIN MOTION): 7 TO 2**IN FAVOUR:** Murdock, Brice, Brownoff, de Vries, Harper, Phelps Bondaroff, Westhaver**OPPOSED:** Chambers, Plant

MOVED by Councillor Brice and Seconded by Councillor Plant: “Reduce capital funding by \$614,400 (0.35% reduction in tax requirement).”

RESULT (MAIN MOTION): 8 TO 1

IN FAVOUR: Murdock, Brice, Brownoff, Chambers, Harper, Phelps Bondaroff, Plant, Westhaver

OPPOSED: de Vries

MOVED by Councillor Brice and Seconded by Councillor Plant: “Reduce various IT software licensing and maintenance program costs by \$69,200 (0.04% reduction in tax requirement).”

RESULT: 9 TO 0

IN FAVOUR: Murdock, Brice, Brownoff, Chambers, de Vries, Harper, Phelps Bondaroff, Plant, Westhaver

OPPOSED: None

MOVED by Councillor Plant and Seconded by Councillor Brice: “That Council recess for five minutes.”

RESULT: Carried 9 TO 0

IN FAVOUR: Murdock, Brice, Brownoff, Chambers, de Vries, Harper, Phelps Bondaroff, Plant, Westhaver

OPPOSED: None

The meeting recessed at 10:15 p.m. and reconvened at 10:21 p.m.

MOVED by Councillor de Vries and Seconded by Councillor Phelps Bondaroff: “That it be recommended that Council direct the inclusion of additional resources in the 2025 Financial Plan set out in Table 3 (0.52% addition in tax requirement).”

The CAO advised that there was a mathematical error in Table 3. The addition would be 0.52%, not 0.47%.

In response to questions from Council, the CAO, Director of Engineering, the Director of Parks, Recreation and Community Services, the Director of Corporate Services and the Director of Planning stated:

- The Road Safety Manager would lead the actions in the Road Safety Action Plan including advocacy, policy development, education and safety audits; without the funds for the staff person, moving forward with the actions would be limited.
- The Manager of Operations for Above Ground Infrastructure would oversee solid waste and street and fleet operations; currently response to these issues is reactive; this position would provide more strategic oversight and allow the municipality to be proactive.

- If the People, Pets and Parks position is not approved, this would result in a reduction in service including waste collection and slower installation of signs.
- Reduction would defer the development and delivery of key new initiatives in the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and the Urban Forest Strategy to future years.
- Consideration of increasing a part time position to a full time position in Risk Management and from a temporary position to a full time position in Corporate Services is requested to increase capacity and reporting.
- The addition of one permanent current planning staff member would add capacity and could decrease application processing times.

Council discussion ensued with the following comments:

- Investing in vital services and priorities is appropriate; moving forward in addressing key items is supportable.
- In these challenging financial times, this may not be the year to add additional positions.
- Looking at efficiencies, it may result in new and better ways of doing business and could free up existing staff time to work on new initiatives.

MOVED by Councillor Plant and Seconded by Councillor Brice: “That debate be closed and the question called.”

RESULT (CALL THE QUESTION): Carried 7 TO 2

IN FAVOUR: Murdock, Brice, Brownoff, Chambers, Harper, Plant, Westhaver

OPPOSED: de Vries, Phelps Bondaroff

RESULT (MAIN MOTION): Failed 2 TO 7

IN FAVOUR: de Vries, Phelps Bondaroff

OPPOSED: Murdock, Brice, Brownoff, Chambers, Harper, Plant, Westhaver

Main Motion (Defeated)

“That it be recommended that Council direct the inclusion of additional resources in the 2025 Financial Plan set out in Table 3 (0.52% addition in tax requirement).”

MOVED by Councillor Plant and Seconded by Councillor Westhaver: “That it be recommended that Council direct the inclusion of additional resources in the 2025 Financial Plan set out in Table 1 (0.04% addition in tax requirement).”

Council discussion ensued with the following comments:

- It is important to ensure that service levels are maintained in these financially challenging times.
- There is a need to invest in programs that benefit the community and move forward with strategic initiatives.

MOVED by Councillor de Vries and Seconded by Councillor Phelps Bondaroff: “That it be recommended that the motion be amended to add Items 11, 12 and 13 from Table 3 to Table 1.”

Council discussion ensued with the following comments:

- Items 11, 12 and 13 in Table 3 pertain to the implementation of the Road Safety Action Plan, the Urban Forest Strategy and the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy.
- These are three major priorities of Council.
- A significant amount of public engagement has taken place on the three items.

In response to questions from Council, the Director of Finance stated:

- The addition of the three items would result in an approximate 0.26% tax increase or \$9.64 per household.

RESULT (AMENDMENT): Failed 2 TO 7

IN FAVOUR: de Vries, Phelps Bondaroff

OPPOSED: Murdock, Brice, Brownoff, Chambers, Harper, Plant, Westhaver

Council discussion ensued with the following comments:

- It is important to show restraint in the budget in order to keep the tax lift reasonable.
- Making decisions on positions is integral to budgeting as salaries are one of the biggest cost drivers.
- Work will continue on priorities but some timelines may be expanded.
- It is order to maintain quality services for the public.
- It is important to be mindful of the costs of the delivery of services, replacement of infrastructure, investing in aging facilities and the impact on taxpayers.

RESULT (MAIN MOTION): Carried 8 TO 1

IN FAVOUR: Murdock, Brice, Brownoff, Chambers, de Vries, Harper, Plant, Westhaver

OPPOSED: Phelps Bondaroff

Main Motion

“That it be recommended that Council direct the inclusion of additional resources in the 2025 Financial Plan set out in Table 1 (0.04% addition in tax requirement).”

ADJOURNMENT

MOVED by Councillor de Vries and Seconded by Councillor Westhaver: “That the meeting be adjourned.”

RESULT: Carried 9 TO 0

IN FAVOUR: Murdock, Brice, Brownoff, Chambers, de Vries, Harper, Phelps Bondaroff, Plant, Westhaver

OPPOSED: None

The meeting adjourned at 10:53 p.m.

CHAIR

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

CORPORATE OFFICER