Nanaimo Airport Land Use Process

The first phase of the Nanaimo Airport Land Use Process is now complete, and the RDN now has the information it needs to proceed with the next phase of an initiative that is intended to bring certainty over future land use at the Nanaimo Airport. The RDN Board is keen to proceed with the next phases of the process which will involve reaching agreement with the Nanaimo Airport Commission on a memorandum of understanding that will address issues on land use jurisdiction, aquifer protection and public consultation.

The RDN has been working to address jurisdiction over land use regulation at the Nanaimo Airport for several years. During the review of the Electoral Area A Official Community Plan, members of the community raised concerns about airport noise, the impacts of aviation and non-aviation uses on the aquifer, and lack of certainty about future land use at the airport. As a result, the RDN retained an independent consultant, City Spaces Consulting, to conduct the region-wide engagement process about airport land use.

As part of the community engagement process the consultant held public meetings in November 2011 and March 2012, met with the Electoral Area ‘A’ OCP Citizens Advisory Committee, and interviewed other stakeholders including CAOs and Directors of Planning for surrounding local governments, Chambers of Commerce, the Nanaimo Economic Development Corporation and others who had previously expressed an interest in the airport.

The RDN and NAC will now proceed with a collaborative process that will result in a Memorandum of Understanding between the two bodies. The terms of the MOU will include a land use plan for the Airport that provides certainty about future use of the airport lands and addresses the concerns of the community with regard to aquifer protection. Following completion of the MOU the next steps will be to update the official community plan and zoning bylaw. Throughout the process, a Citizens Advisory Group will be used to provide feedback and to review the draft MOU as it is developed.

For more information about the Nanaimo Airport Land Use Process, residents may call the Long Range Planning Department at 250-390-6510.

Rainwater Harvesting Best Practices Guidebook

This October the RDN published a valuable resource for residents who wish to learn more about the benefits and opportunities of rainwater harvesting. The Rainwater Harvesting Best Practices Guidebook is an information source specific to the RDN’s location and climate, and a practical tool for RDN residents interested in building their own rainwater harvesting systems or working with professionals to do so.

Rainwater harvesting (RWH) is the collection and storage of rainwater for potable and nonpotable uses. With proper controls in place, harvested rainwater can be used for irrigation, outdoor cleaning, flushing toilets, washing clothes, and even drinking water. Replacing municipally-treated water or groundwater with rainwater for these uses takes pressure off of regional aquifers and sensitive ecosystems, and reduces demands on municipal infrastructure. Stored rainwater provides an ideal source of water, particularly during long dry summers or in locations...
experiencing declining groundwater levels. In regions serviced by community water systems, RWH systems can complement existing infrastructure. Capturing, storing, and using rainwater where it falls can slow down or eliminate storm water runoff, reduce energy consumption compared to wells, and at large enough scales, delay the need for water utility expansions.

The 2007 RDN Drinking Water and Watershed Protection Plan and RDN Watershed Snapshot Report 2010 identify increased population, dropping groundwater levels in certain areas, and stressed ecosystems as reasons to promote rainwater harvesting in the region. In response to this need, the Rainwater Harvesting Best Practices Guidebook encourages the responsible use of rainwater as a safe, sustainable water source for private residences. RWH systems are capable of producing clean, high quality water, provided they are correctly designed, constructed, and maintained. It is important to remember that residents should always consult professionals when planning and constructing their RWH systems, especially for potable RWH systems.

Presently, no single set of Provincial or Federal regulations addresses the collection, storage, purification and disinfection of rainwater. The Guidebook is a best practices resource for those interested in building a RWH system. After reading the Guidebook, residents and professional practitioners will better understand how different RWH systems are put together, how they function, and the effort required to maintain them.

The Guidebook is intended as the first in a series of annual green building guidebooks. Check the RDN website often to learn more about this and other green building initiatives.

For more information, to receive a copy of the Rainwater Harvesting Best Practices Guidebook, or to suggest topics for future green building guidebooks, please call the RDN Energy and Sustainability Department at 250-390-6510 or 250-954-3798, or email sustainability@rdn.bc.ca. The Guidebook is also available at rdn.bc.ca under Services/Energy and Sustainability.

Electric Vehicle Charging Stations
The Regional District of Nanaimo, in partnership with the City of Parksville, the Town of Qualicum Beach and the District of Lantzville has been awarded a provincial planning grant from the Community Charging Infrastructure Fund and the Fraser Basin Council. The funding will be used to identify ideal locations for Level II Electric Vehicle Charging Stations across the region. This allows each of the local government partners to identify appropriate locations for charging infrastructure within their boundaries, to work with prospective charging station hosts to prioritize 12 sites over the fall of 2012, and to install charging stations at each of those sites, ready for use by March 31, 2013. With an appropriate location and willing station host, additional provincial funding will be available to cover up to 75 per cent of the cost to purchase and install an electric vehicle charging station in this Electoral Area.

Level II charging stations are capable of fully charging electric drive vehicles in three to eight hours. The RDN is looking for charging station locations that are accessible to residents and visitors, and where vehicles are usually parked for three or more hours.

The provincial government funding provided through the Community Charging Infrastructure Fund has enabled the RDN to start planning for a future that includes electric vehicle use by residents and visitors to the Region, and we look forward to continued collaboration with the Province and the Fraser Basin Council on this important initiative. The RDN is a transportation hub and a tourism destination, and by providing charging infrastructure, the RDN aims to encourage a more sustainable travel option within our communities.

For more information about this initiative, you may contact the RDN Energy and Sustainability Department at 250-390-6510 or 250-954-3798. In addition, the Province has provided an online Electric Vehicle Toolkit, available here: http://www.livesmartbc.ca/incentives/transportation/EV-toolkit.html

Quennel Lake Boat Launch
The RDN has recently completed a boat launch on Ritten Road providing access to Quennell Lake for small boats. The Ministry of Environment provided funding and worked with RDN staff on this project. In addition to the boat launch, the area includes parking spaces, a garbage can and toilet facilities.

Emergency Preparedness—Flooding
Flooding happens regularly in some areas of our community, and a few hours of preparation can make a big difference during an emergency situation. In the event of a flood, it is important to know what to do, where to seek information and what to take with you or leave behind. It is a good idea to know how to shut down your main power system(s), to be aware of how to unplug all appliances, big or small, and to have bags packed in case you need to leave on short notice.

A Grab ‘n’ Go Bag is an important item to have ready for any evacuation. Make sure that it is packed with essential items such as (but not limited to) a battery flashlight or radio, personal medication, personal items such as glasses or contact lenses, a basic first aid kit, a change of clothing, water, non-perishable foods and emergency blankets.

For more information and resources, email emergencyplanning@rdn.bc.ca, call 250-390-6510, 250-954-3798, or toll free 1-877-607-4111, or go to rdn.bc.ca and click on Services/Emergency Planning/Flood Facts. The Emergency Planning web page also has a Personal Emergency Preparedness Guidebook available for residents to download.