OAK BAY NEWS

Oak Bay greenlights street naming, renaming policy

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A street sign in Oak Bay. (Liam Razzell/Oak Bay News)

Picking names for new streets just got easier in Oak Bay.

On Nov. 9, council voted to approve a new policy that establishes a clear and consistent framework for naming and renaming the district's streets, parks, facilities and other public spaces.

"This is really just a way of making the process a little bit more efficient so that staff has a starting place when coming up with a name," CAO Michelle Hunt told council.

The policy stipulates that the naming of public spaces must reflect the history, geography and cultural identity of the community; promote equity, diversity and inclusion, including Indigenous recognition; ensure names are clear, pronounceable and suitable for emergency services; avoid duplication or confusion with existing local street names; and give priority or strong preference to Indigenous names.

It also offers a bank of 18 possible street names, all of which relate to local flora or fauna. They are: blacktail, camas bloom, cormorant, elderberry, goldeneye, killdeer, kingfisher, lingcod, nootka rose, osprey, red cedar, rockfish, salal, sandpiper, snowberry, towhee, twinberry and tarrow.

Coun. Hazel Braithwaite asked staff whether Songhees and Esquimalt nations had an opportunity to review or provide input into the policy, and if they would be involved in developing future naming opportunities, “rather than just simply being asked to approve the names that we were to propose.”

Hunt told Braithwaite that staff has consulted with both First Nations, while the policy notes that “proposed Indigenous names must be developed in collaboration with the appropriate First Nations group and include confirmation of meaning and cultural context, correct spelling and orthography and documentation of support or approval.”

At the Nov. 9 meeting, the policy was put to use when council voted to rename a cul-de-sac along King George Terrace. Staff had initially proposed the name Red Cedar Place, but locals replied with a list of suggestions, among which was Shoal Bay Place, which fulfills the criteria in the naming policy.

Final street naming rests with council through bylaw approval.