

James Bay Neighbourhood Association

**General Monthly Meeting
Wed November 13, 2024
7:00pm to 9:00pm via ZOOM**

AGENDA

- 1. Trevor Moat in Chair**
- 2. Councillor Jeremy Caradonna**
- 3. Guest speaker: Jacques Sirois, Migratory Bird Sanctuary.** Jacques Sirois is the Chairperson of the Friends of Victoria Harbour Migratory Bird Sanctuary which runs from the Gorge Inlet to 10 Mile Point. He is also a volunteer warden for Trial Island Ecological Reserve.
- 4. Community Comments**

1. Opening Remarks

Trevor Moat, Chair, opened the meeting with a land acknowledgement of the traditional territories of the Lekwungen-speaking peoples, the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations.

2. Councillor Caradonna

Councillor Jeremy Caradonna provided updates on advocacy motions passed at council, focusing on downtown small businesses' challenges and urging the new government to address these issues. He also discussed the city's more assertive stance on sheltering and the lack of commitments from other jurisdictions. The Councillor mentioned several other motions, including one for the mayor to write to other jurisdictions to set up a warming center or consider setting one up.

He also discussed the city's proposed budget increases for three James Bay organizations, with modest increases for the Neighborhood Association and a higher increase for James Bay New Horizons.

Budget Presentation: Councillor Caradonna informed us about challenges faced by the city, including high inflation, underinvestment in capital assets, and climate change. He highlighted that the city's inflation rate is higher than the consumer price index due to the cost of construction materials. He also noted that the city has not saved enough for asset management and that climate change is accelerating the degradation of assets.

Councillor Caradonna mentioned that the police department has requested a significant increase in funding, which would account for a 3.34% increase in taxes. He also pointed out that while residents generally want higher levels of service,

they do not want an increase in their property taxes. He emphasized the need for potential cuts in the budget to address these challenges.

The Councillor discussed the results of a survey conducted by Ipsos, which polled 700 residents of Victoria, representing about 1% of the city's population. The survey showed that a majority of respondents wanted the same or more services, including roads, parks, arts, and social services. However, they did not necessarily want to pay for these services through increased taxes. He noted that the survey results indicated a desire for a high quality of life, but also a perception that life was getting harder. He concluded that if cuts were to be made to the budget, they would likely have to come from scaling back on services.

Victoria Council presented a proposed property tax lift of 12.7%, the highest in Victoria's living memory, with a potential reduction to 12.1% due to the allocation of new property tax revenue into the capital budget. Councillor Caradonna discussed the need to replenish depleted capital reserves over several years, with a compounded action of 2.8% for five years. The tax lift would be used to maintain sustainable levels of road infrastructure and to keep up with rising costs due to climate change.

Councillor Caradonna also mentioned the city's relationship with Victoria Police Department. The City is in charge of the Police Department's budget, but has no role in determining VicPD operations. The Police Department has asked for a 10% lift this year, which includes hiring 7 or 8 new staff. The City is on the cusp of severing the agreement for police services with Esquimalt, which will take another year or two. There is uncertainty about increased staffing on the cusp of a major reorganization.

The Councillor presented a detailed analysis of the City's budget, highlighting the challenges of maintaining a balanced budget amidst increasing costs and decreasing revenues. He emphasized the importance of the tax base, indicating that a 1% tax reduction would result in a permanent loss of \$1.8 million from the budget.

Community Questions:

- A question was raised about bike lanes and parking spots, and the need to balance these with other priorities. He acknowledged that the exact percentage of the capital budget spent on bike lanes was not readily available, but assured that it was a small percentage compared to the overall cost of maintaining roads.
- Concern was expressed about the tax increases and the potential negative impact on the community, particularly regarding the Police Department's separation from Esquimalt. The Councillor explained that the separation was a short-term measure to facilitate long-term amalgamation of police forces. He also noted that Esquimalt was pushing for the separation, despite the potential costs.
- A community member requested data be presented at the next meeting on the allocation of road maintenance budget to bike lanes and sidewalks.

3. Victoria Harbor Bird Sanctuary Presentation

Jacques Sirois gave a presentation on the Victoria Harbour Bird Sanctuary, a Federal migratory bird sanctuary and one of three in Greater Victoria. He highlighted the sanctuary's 100-year history, its 30-kilometer length, and the presence of various bird species, including the Pacific great blue heron and the wimble.

The sanctuary is also home to a number of rare plants, such as the golden paintbrush and the bearded owl clover, and there is potential for the discovery of a new plant species. He further discussed the sanctuary's peregrine falcons, which have been nesting on a rooftop in Victoria, and the bufflehead ducks that winter there.

There are current restoration projects, including the creation of a pocket beach at Lime Bay Park and the Fisherman's Wharf Rain Garden. Lastly, Mr. Sirois reviewed ongoing conversations with the Greater Victoria Harbour Authority about building a nature trail at the Ogden Point Breakwater.

4. Community Comments

A community member expressing interest in banning leaf blowers in James Bay. She was encouraged to write to Councillor Caradonna.

Another member inquired about the progress of the gas station at Menzies and Michigan. A link to a Capital Daily article which offers updates was provided.

The conversation ended with the Chair announcing that our December 11 meeting would be an in-person meeting at James Bay New Horizons.

Zoom Chat

00:25:52 JBNA: An announcement came in after our newsletter went out. South Park Family School is requesting gift donations for a second-hand "shopping" experience for students for their families. Gently used, with certain restrictions. See our Facebook for details: <https://www.facebook.com/jamesbayneighbourhoodassociation/>

00:44:23 Laurie Abel: Increased density adds to the tax base. Can you quantify the impact of this increased tax base?

00:44:46 kathleen bligh: Stop ruining the roads

00:45:05 kathleen bligh: might help with the frustration levels

00:46:53 kathleen bligh: Using our tax dollars to take away our parking spots. Not to mention the decreased convenient parking downtowns is harming small business.

00:49:23 Corinne MacDonald: How much has been spent on establishing bike lanes and intersection improvements for bike lanes in relation to the road maintenance construction

budget? What percentage is this of the road maintenance budget? How much has been spent on sidewalk and pedestrian accessibility?

00:50:32 kathleen bligh: Reacted to "How much has been sp..." with 👍

00:50:35 Pat Nichols: Reacted to "How much has been sp..." with 👍

00:53:55 Graham Hawkins: Reacted to "How much has been sp..." with 👍

00:55:20 edy bradley: And the increase you councillors have approved for your own remuneration ???

00:55:35 Roberta Solvey: We need a department of government efficiency

00:55:45 kathleen bligh: Reacted to "We need a department..." with ❤️

00:56:53 Roberta Solvey: I'll do it for free.

00:56:56 heather shon: Bike lanes are definitely a large cost, unnecessary given the number of people using the lanes, also contributing to climate negatives with GGE sitting in your car waiting to go nowhere. We need a not a department we need tough measures, cut staff, reduce waste, improve efficiency

00:57:10 David Roberts: Reacted to "How much has been sp..." with 👍

00:57:34 kathleen bligh: Reacted to "Bike lanes are defin..." with ❤️

00:57:36 edy bradley: And what about the high cost of the city professional staff that you councillors almost never take the advice of. What about that waste?

00:57:58 kathleen bligh: Reacted to "And what about the h..." with 👍

00:58:22 Corinne MacDonald: Reacted to "And what about the h..." with 👍

00:59:27 Pat Nichols: JBNA can we get Corinne's question answered please?

00:59:36 Ben Ziegler: Thanks for the presentation Jeremy. How does the proposed tax lift compare with that in other munis in other parts of the province? How are they approaching the services-tax conundrum?

01:00:51 Karen G.: Reacted to "And what about the h..." with 👍

01:02:03 kathleen bligh: They are not "upgrades" they are "street thinning"

01:03:45 heather shon: they are rethinking wisely to 1 lane on McKenzie

01:03:54 Kevin Youck: Seems like the proposed redevelopment of Centennial Square needs to be postponed or redeveloped to something more affordable, in addition to rethinking or postponing other "nice to have, but not needed" projects --- these funds can be redirected towards maintenance that is needed.

01:04:20 kathleen bligh: behaviour modifications to force you to get rid of your cars. He is spouting Sustainable Development Goals.

01:04:22 Graham Hawkins: There are way too many bike lanes already so we don't need any more. Four-wheeled vehicles are not going to decrease in number as they will simply be hybrid or electric so the congestion will continue or get worse. Nonsensical thinking at it's best. And this rebuke about bike lanes is coming from an avid cyclist who has lived here in the downtown area for 42 years.

01:04:58 kathleen bligh: Reacted to "There are way too ma..." with ❤️

01:05:25 Kevin Youck: Given the duplicity of services within the various municipalities with respect to Police, Fire, and City staff, a more concerted push needs to be made towards amalgamation.

01:05:39 Graham Hawkins: Reacted to "Given the duplicity ..." with 👍

01:05:59 Laurie Abel: Reacted to "Given the duplicity ..." with 🙌

01:06:06 Becky Vander Steen: Reacted to "Seems like the propo..." with 👍
01:06:22 Laurie Abel: Reacted to "Given the duplicity ..." with 👍
01:09:08 Becky Vander Steen: Reacted to "Given the duplicity ..." with 👍
01:10:22 Beth Dixon: May we have a copy of the budget presentation please?
01:10:46 Kevin Youck: Reacted to "There are way too ma..." with ❤️
01:13:34 JBNA: Replying to "May we have a copy o..."

Hi Beth, it will be posted under "presentations" on this page likely tomorrow!

<https://jbna.org/monthly-meetings/>

01:14:02 Beth Dixon: Replying to "May we have a copy o..."

@JBNA Thank you!

01:14:08 JBNA: Reacted to "May we have a copy o..." with 👍
01:14:26 JBNA: Reacted to "@JBNA Thank you!" with 👍
01:16:57 Graham Hawkins: Reacted to "May we have a copy o..." with 👍
01:20:24 Pat Nichols: I love birds. Enjoying this presentation by Jacques Sirois = I will be more educated.
01:21:17 Ben Ziegler: Reacted to "I love birds. Enjoyi..." with 👍
01:21:27 Ben Ziegler: Jacques enthusiasm for the subject is infectious!
01:21:41 William Ostenstad: Reacted to "I love birds. Enjoyi..." with 👍
01:22:14 JBNA: Reacted to "I love birds. Enjoyi..." with 👍
01:22:34 JBNA: Reacted to "Jacques enthusiasm f..." with 👍
01:23:02 William Ostenstad: Reacted to "Jacques enthusiasm f..." with 👍
01:23:06 Graham Hawkins: Reacted to "I love birds. Enjoyi..." with 👍
01:23:45 Corinne MacDonald: Reacted to "Jacques enthusiasm f..." with 👍
01:26:35 Pat Nichols: That's a great idea about educational signage for all the creatures we see from Ogden Point!
01:26:57 William Ostenstad: Reacted to "That's a great idea ..." with 👍
01:26:58 Corinne MacDonald: Reacted to "That's a great idea ..." with 👍
01:27:05 Pat Nichols: Thanks for this!
01:28:13 Corinne MacDonald: Reacted to "Thanks for this!" with 👍
01:28:14 heather shon: very nice presentation on birds. thank you!
01:29:08 kathleen bligh: Does anyone know what is happening at the waterfront where JB Anglers used to be?
01:30:11 Diana Scheffler: Great idea!
01:30:38 Graham Hawkins: Reacted to "very nice presentati..." with 👍
01:32:57 Pat Nichols: Thanks very much.
01:33:05 JBNA:
<https://www.capitaldaily.ca/news/weve-got-gas-james-bay-gas-station-to-reopen-after-7-years>
01:33:11 JBNA: ^ info from Oct
01:33:39 Brad & Christine: Is there a vertual version of the meeting?