



Council chambers were packed during the Jan. 20 meeting while council discussed the issue of unrelated occupancy limits. (Teale Phelps Bondaroff/Twitter)

# Public hearing on unrelated occupancy limits to take place at Saanich Municipal Hall on a Saturday

Council seeks to make the hearing accessible to all residents

DEVON BIDAL / Feb. 27, 2020 7:30 a.m. / LOCAL NEWS / NEWS

Saanich council has decided to host the public hearing on the potential unrelated occupancy limit increase on a Saturday so more residents can attend.

The issue of roommate limits has been a controversial topic in Saanich since it was brought to council in early 2019. After reviewing a staff report in January, council agreed to move to

a public hearing to consider the option to increase the number of unrelated occupants allowed in a home from four to six.

At the Feb. 24 meeting, council was presented with a report from staff outlining the reasons why the public hearing should be held at Municipal Hall, not in the Gordon Head neighbourhood as was originally proposed by council.

Staff considered three facilities to host the hearing: Mount Douglas Secondary School, the Gordon Head Recreation Centre and ArtsCalibre Academy.

However, it was determined that the costs for an off-site meeting – between \$3,950 and \$5,641, according to the report – were too high and webcasting the meeting for residents at home wouldn't be an option. The report concluded that the public hearing should be held at Municipal Hall.

Coun. Nathalie Chambers was vocal about supporting the staff recommendation as there are transit stops near the Municipal Hall and free parking, and webcasting equipment would be readily available.

Coun. Colin Plant amended the motion to include that the hearing be held on a Saturday in an effort to “be as inclusive as possible.”

He explained that the affected students made it clear that they cannot attend a hearing on a weeknight due to homework.

Plant also suggested that the hearing run from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. in anticipation of attendance being high, and staff confirmed that a weekend hearing would never be scheduled in the evening.

Despite staffing implications, council unanimously agreed to schedule the public hearing on a Saturday at Municipal Hall. District staff will report back to council with date options based on council and staff availability.

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[devon.bidal@saanichnews.com](mailto:devon.bidal@saanichnews.com)



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