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Esquimalt looks to sewage plant for heat at municipal and recreation buildings

[Rob Shaw \(/authors?author=Rob Shaw\)](#) / Times Colonist January 15, 2013

Esquimalt is searching for ways to use the heat from the region's proposed sewage treatment plant to warm its municipal buildings and recreation centres.

The township issued a request for proposals on Tuesday for a \$30,000 study into the possibility of drawing heat and other resources from a treatment facility planned for McLoughlin Point.

"The first step is [to determine] what are the possible sources of recovered energy, and can the township actually utilize them in an economical manner," said Jeff Miller, director of engineering and public works.

Esquimalt's municipal hall, library, public safety building, recreation centre, sports centre and public-works yard are about two kilometres from McLoughlin Point, where the Capital Regional District wants to build the region's secondary sewage treatment facility.

Esquimalt is also planning two highrises near its town hall as part of a proposed village development project that may also include small-scale sewage treatment and resource recovery.

The township's study will look at whether heat can be piped over the two-kilometre distance and the potential cost to retrofit municipal buildings to utilize the energy, Miller said.

CRD studies have pointed to heat as being one of the most viable resources recovered from sewage treatment, with the potential to heat 18,500 houses.

Esquimalt's study will also look at reusing treated sewage water, biogas generation and recovery of elements such as phosphorus.

It remains unclear who owns the resources that can be recovered from sewage and whether Esquimalt would be allowed, or have to pay for, access to recoverable water and energy.

"The question is still there," said Denise Blackwell, chairwoman of the region's sewage committee.

That uncertainty also affects communities such as Colwood, where private companies want to build their own treatment plants as part of residential developments and recover energy from the waste, she said.

Esquimalt Mayor Barb Desjardins said the municipality never wanted the region's treatment plant. But, if it has to be there, the town should get some sort of compensation.

Depending on what the study finds, Esquimalt could look at energy recovery as part of that compensation, Desjardins said.

A heat recovery system is already operating in North Saanich, where the Saanich Peninsula sewage treatment plant recovers energy that is used to warm the nearby Panorama Recreation Centre.

However, that \$3-million project was funded mostly by a federal grant. It saves \$112,000 a year in natural gas, but costs \$50,000 in maintenance, and would take more than 30 years to recover its capital investment, according to the CRD's website.

Esquimalt's study is expected to be ready by March 27.

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