Saanich approves vote on citizens' assembly

Saanich Municipal Hall
Photograph By BRUCE STOTESBURY, Times Colonist

The establishment of a citizens' assembly to explore the costs, benefits and disadvantages of the amalgamation of Victoria and Saanich could cost up to $750,000, with each municipality and the province paying one-third of the price.

On Monday night, Saanich council ratified a decision to ask voters in the municipal election on Oct. 20 if they are in favour of establishing a citizens' assembly to explore the amalgamation of Saanich and Victoria.

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The ratification discussion centred on the addition of the dollar figure to the question.

The question for voters now reads: "Are you in favour of spending up to $250,000 for establishing a Citizens' Assembly to explore the costs, benefits and disadvantages of the amalgamation between the District of Saanich and the City of Victoria?"

The same question will be put to Victoria council on Thursday.

"Staff are estimating that the cost of the citizens' assembly is approximately $750,000 and recommending that Saanich council allocates up to $250,000 from its strategic-initiatives fund with the remainder of the cost funded equally by the province of B.C. and the City of Victoria," said a memo to staff and council from Angila Bains, manager of legislative services.

The funding from the province has not been confirmed yet.

Coun. Judy Brownoff, in voting against the ratification, suggested that governance doesn't appear anywhere as a priority for residents and that more pressing issues are at hand than funding a citizens' assembly.

If Victoria ratifies its question, the vote on Oct. 20 for a citizens' assembly "is a go," said Saanich Mayor Richard Atwell.

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