

From:  
Tim Maki and Rebecca Ewing  
[REDACTED]  
Mayne Island

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BC Dear Mayne Island Local Trust Committee,

Further to our previous letters, we are providing more information about our farm and the role it plays within the Village Bay Road/trail corridor.

**1. Village Bay Road is a forested, welcoming corridor.**

Rural zoning has been a fairly effective tool to retain the forest corridor and flow of benefits it provides along Village Bay Road and LTC should not let go of it. Rezoning rural land would place the multiple amenities provided by the forest corridor at risk. Neighbours seem to want to maintain forests and we think the rural zoning along this corridor has aided that without adding new layers of regulation.

Six property owners have responsibility for managing the lands along the downward side of Village Bay Road that skirts the foot of Mount Park. Three of the owners ([REDACTED]) manage properties that are on the edge of the recharge zone for the aquifer that serves Maple Drive and Miners Bay. At present, the corridor is almost all in forest. The way these properties are managed has a great influence on the degree to which forest connectivity is maintained, how well surface water flows are regulated in the winter months, and the extent to which the road and trail corridor retains the rural, forested look and feel that most people enjoy and want. This road/trail corridor is what welcomes visitors to the island on their way into Miners Bay.

The proposed subdivision sets in motion a development trajectory along the corridor that makes the ability to retain forest lands and safeguard the aquifer more difficult. Property owners take their cues from neighbours and decision-makers. This proposed development runs in direct opposition to the better alternative of taking steps toward safeguarding the forests along this corridor.

By protecting the corridor, we are keeping a valuable ecosystem intact which then improves the ability to protect an important aquifer and retain scenic and vital forest experiences for residents and visitors.

**2. We purchased our land because we knew what it once was and the rural zoning was supportive of what we wanted to do. Our agricultural practices build back the forest and it is a lifelong project.**

We are restoring this forest while building a farm business that supplies the island with locally grown food. Our approach to growing food is a sustainable way to derive profit on small private land holding while growing back the forest. We have tied our fortune to the forest and developed a business whose success depends on a healthy forest.

Our 10 acre parcel saw logging and the removal of most of the older and old growth Douglas-firs on the property. There are five areas that were de-stumped and cleared and the rest remained in forest. We bought the property in 2013 and have been trying out various ways to restore the forest lands while growing marketable products. In 2019, we were granted farm status by the BC Assessment Authority for parts of the property. We are fencing off parts of the cleared areas where natural regeneration has

been poor and expanding the forest edge with the objective of growing short-term vegetable crops to fund our efforts while transitioning to a greater reliance on perennial berry, tree fruit and nut crops. Eventually, when the forest canopy has grown back, we will be adopting techniques to maintain a temperate food forest that as much as possible draws on existing plant relationships found within coastal Douglas-fir ecosystems.

We see a range of benefits from our work:

- The forest is growing back and connectivity is improving which will improve the role our property plays in maintaining a healthy forest, a healthy aquifer and regulating surface water flow.
- We have far more birds and insects around us than before and the numbers of amphibians and snakes seems to be growing.
- We are contributing to the development of a stronger agricultural value chain on the island by growing products and selling them to local businesses.
- We are helping to maintain a forested corridor that will, in tandem with a well designed trail system, be a lasting asset to the community.

This year we walked the property with a member of the local conservancy to get their input on our efforts and progress to date. Improvement of the pond to create better wetland conditions on the property was identified as the priority in the short term.

We have taken care to create no go buffers along property lines and the roadway to be good neighbours and grow back valued aesthetics and rural charm. We located our main area of fencing over 20 metres away from Village Bay Road and 15+ metres away from the property where the development is now proposed. That buffer is a swath of forest extending from Village Bay Road, around the back of our neighbours on Maple Drive, and over to the Hydro lines bordering the Tsartlip property; it includes dry slopes where five old growth Douglas-firs remain on the east side of our property (three of which are close to tree #5 in the arborist's report) and wetter areas with alder/cedar/sword fern.

Forest cover changes and other developments along the property line could significantly alter conditions and impact our growing forest and commitment. Some studies note that tree removal impacts forest lands hundreds of metres away, for example.

**3. The parcel proposed for development is too small to build on in a way that protects high priority ecosystem values and older trees - it cannot provide adequate buffers and measures to protect neighbour interests.**

A number of studies (local conservancy notes, the biologist's report and the arborist's report) have each underscored the importance of the property from an ecological perspective and there has been considerable attention paid to protecting and restoring wetter forest areas and a wetland area on the property. More recently, the older Douglas-firs and wildlife trees on the property have been assessed and recommendations have been made by the arborist to safeguard them. We understand that a suitable location on the parcel cannot be found for the septic system and that it would need to stray into one of the new parcels created where it would run through a stand of old Douglas-firs which the arborist has advised tree protection zones be established. The additional clearing and thinning required to manage wildfire risks hasn't been discussed yet but if Firesmart guidelines are followed, the additional forest area to be cleared and/or modified to reduce fuel loading will be substantial and

preclude the ability to create natural forest buffers. As well, the development, regardless of its design, will increase risk to the aquifer and make the management of surface water flows on the sloped land more challenging.

We have been asked to comment on the buffer for the western property line of the development that abuts our property. First, we must re-emphasize our first point that the current 10 acre rural zoned parcel is serving as a buffer for the community by providing forest amenities along Village Bay Road. Our hope is that LTC affirms the role and value of the rural zone and sticks to it.

Given that we disagree with this development and its location, what would our expectation for a buffer be for an additional 10 housing units for 25 people? The arborist's recommendations for a no go zone for 10 metres around the larger Douglas-fir on the western property line (tree #4) and 8 metres for the other large diameter Douglas-fir (tree #5) is a starting point. The arborist identifies key trees but there needs to be recognition that the accompanying forest also requires protection. This creates a 20 metre strip along the western property line to be kept as a no go forested zone.

Working out from the cluster of houses, fire protection buffers will be needed to protect neighbours and residents of the development and to reduce the higher wildfire risks created by placing this housing development in a sloped, forested area which extends into neighbouring properties on all sides. FireSmart prescribes a 10 metre zone around the houses that is cleared and put into grass and a further 30 metres around this zone where fuel loading is reduced through thinning and removal of dead wood on the ground etc. The FireSmart guidelines say that even wider buffers may be needed on sloped lands.

It is hard to tell how wide the parcel is but based on the Arborist's map it appears to be about 70 metres wide. We believe that the housing development cannot provide sufficient buffers in the long term regardless of what assurances are provided today. As the reality of the Islands Trust-acknowledged climate emergency sets in, there will be a need to make developments such as this firesafe – if not today then sometime in the near future. The parcel is not wide enough to make the development firesafe and maintain the integrity of the tree protection zones meaning any natural forest buffers provided through setbacks and covenants would be compromised.

## **Conclusion**

In assessing where the greatest public good is to be created, the LTC is challenged to weigh the relative value of ecosystem health, the multifamily rental housing model, aquifer health, and rural and aesthetic values. These values must be considered with today, tomorrow and the future in mind when the young families who face the challenges of home affordability on this island will be old. In twenty years from now, will the housing development be judged a folly or a solid step forward into a better future?

The range of risks identified to date include:

- An ongoing financial burden to the community and an unproven model for improving affordability on Mayne Island.
- Fragmentation of the forest, eroding the ability to maintain coastal Douglas-fir forest contiguity and the rare ecosystems they host.
- Increased risk of wildfire and erosion of ecosystem values on the parcel.
- Increased flows of surface water downhill.
- Compromising neighbour efforts to maintain and enhance forest and ecosystem values.

- Increased draw on the aquifer and no clear assessment of overall aquifer health.
- Permanent deforestation hurting potential water quality and recharge rates in the aquifer.
- Erosion of landowner commitment to protect/maintain the forest in the Village Bay Road corridor.
- Devaluation of a natural amenity that is valued by residents and visitors.

As Mayne Island approaches build-out, decisions around where to focus future development need to be made in the context of an integrated view of “preserve and protect”. A resilient, resourceful and welcoming community depends on a foundation of functioning ecosystems and forests that provide the benefits and services that we rely on and the things that brought many of us to this island in the first place. Future subdivisions, density increases, measures to improve affordability, new parks and maintaining the green infrastructure – these decisions can build a more resilient, resourceful, attractive and livable community. But they cannot do that if one perceived amenity is played off against another – that just forecloses on opportunities that are ever more precious as this island approaches build out.

Given the risks and the severity of their impacts, we ask that LTC:

- Set an objective of retaining the rural and forested aesthetic that islanders and visitors enjoy along the Village Bay Road/trail corridor. The rural zoning should be kept as it is along the corridor.
- Improve the understanding of the aspirations of seniors, renters and owners who are in situations that are not affordable and develop strategies grounded in an understanding of what is needed, possible, affordable and sustainable in the short and long term. People’s preferences in terms of rental and ownership options need to be known before investing in expensive solutions.
- Continue its work to develop Tiny Home and flexible housing options which can improve affordability of ownership. These options more directly tap into the spirit and dreams that young people and families bring to the island. Such ownership options come without a huge outlay of public and private donor funds and would also create and free up private sector rental units as some current renters move to ownership.

Sincerely,

Tim Maki and Rebecca Ewing