

From: R Wright <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Friday, January 19, 2024 11:40 AM
To: SSIInfo
Cc: Chris Hutton
Subject: Bylaw 537 First Reading

Dear Chris Hutton,

I write to object against the recently announced "First Reading" of Bylaw 537, which the SSI LTC will consider on Monday. I request that my objection be entered on the record and be brought to our trustees' attention before the Jan 22 LTC meeting.

There's only one reason why the latest version of Bylaw 530 has mysteriously become Bylaw 537: to dodge the legal requirement for a full Public Hearing before it can be passed by Salt Spring trustees. The province recently waived Public Hearings for *new* bylaws that do not breach an Official Community Plan (OCP). For the past two years Trustee Laura Patrick was telling us —against obvious evidence —that the former version of Bylaw 530, which would have doubled zoning density over most of the island, did not breach the OCP. But she and Trustee Jamie Harris had to abandon that fantasy in the face of legal advice and stiff opposition. Now a slimmer version, originally floated last March as "Phase 1" of Bylaw 530, suddenly becomes the "new" Bylaw 537 —and public debate is sidestepped.

In last week's *Driftwood*, our trustees posted formal notice that they will give Bylaw 537 "First Reading" at a special meeting on Monday January 22nd, by Zoom. If it were only First Reading there might be less cause for alarm, as three readings —normally spaced over several months —must be held before a bylaw can be sent to Trust Executive for sign-off. But Laura Patrick has already let slip that she intends to pass all three readings of Bylaw 537 in one go. Trust staff have confirmed this could indeed happen on January 22nd. If it does, the official notice will have seriously misled the public.

Such gaming of due process is not the only reason for mistrust. Yet again, the trustees are telling us this re-zoning bylaw "is consistent" with our OCP. If Bylaw 537 stayed within the map attached to its latest draft, perhaps it might be. But trustees are also seeking ways to grow the bylaw's reach through "spot zoning," which means encouraging landowners to apply for extra density piecemeal almost anywhere on Salt Spring. The end result might become much the same as that of Bylaw 530's most extreme version: haphazard suburban sprawl.

Laura Patrick has always claimed Bylaw 530/537 is urgently needed to tackle the housing shortage, especially the lack of affordable long-term rentals for islanders. If this is true, why does

no version of the bylaw even mention affordability or contain any means to achieve it? Why focus only on the free-market Auxiliary Dwelling Unit model, which has failed to ease housing problems in big cities and small communities alike? Why no interest in promoting co-operative or public partnership housing, such as Salt Spring's successful Croftonbrook? And why are our trustees not calling for Salt Spring to be included in the Speculation and Vacancy Tax, and BC's new law to control short-term holiday rentals (Airbnb etc), which the January 10th *Times Colonist* reports is already having an effect in Victoria?

Judging by their deeds so far, our trustees' main interest seems to be exploiting the housing shortage to unleash mass private development in a legally protected area. The next big project in their cross-hairs is to "revise" our Official Community Plan during this year and next. They have already obtained \$120,000 of public money to hire outside consultants. Salt Springers must watch this carefully and be sure to make their voices heard. The many twists and turns with Bylaw 530/537 do not bode well for an open and above-board process.

With thanks for your time,

Ronald Wright

