

On Feb 5, 2022, at 2:02 PM, Mavis MacMillen <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Dear Trustees,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to both the content and the process with respect to proposed Bylaw 528. At a time when the overall policy statement of the Islands Trust is up for deliberation, it is inappropriate for the Local Trust Committee to press ahead with fundamental amendments to zoning regulations in a flawed effort to expand affordable housing in a manner which might well contradict the policy priorities to emerge from the policy review.

Moreover, it seems that Bylaw 528 puts the procedural cart before the horse by requiring amendments to the Official Community Plan after the fact rather than taking direction from the OCP as it stands. If the desire is to amend the OCP, it is incumbent of the Trustees to respect the consultative process required under the governing legislation. The potentially long-lasting and deleterious consequences of Bylaw 528 should not be pursued without full and exhaustive public discussion, especially as the bylaw appears to contravene the current OCP. I urge you to do the right thing and drop first reading of Bylaw 528 pending a full and open public discussion of its merits and demerits.

Some other thoughts on the Trust mandate: It is an unfortunate reality that population growth puts pressure on local services and the environment, and this is especially so in places that are desirable to live. Salt Spring is one of those places, and the pressures are the more so because it is an island with limited water resources and vulnerable ecosystems. (Consider also the scourges of broom, gorse, and an overpopulation of deer that now plague this island.) Salt Spring has a limit, a carrying capacity, identified in the OCP. It is why we have long had a preserve and protect mandate which everyone understood to mean the natural environment. Is that carrying capacity now irrelevant?

Ironically, the North Salt Spring Water District and its moratorium are regularly cast as the villains in the piece when in fact its directors are among the few elected officials who are actively protecting a natural resource essential to the functioning of this island. People are constantly voicing hope that the moratorium will be lifted and thus will solve their housing problem. Did anyone notice that the lake was perilously close to its legal draw-down last summer? Summers are getting hotter, with less rain. Furthermore, do they not realize that even if it were lifted there is a long lineup of property owners who have priority access, including the litigious Channel Ridge developers? Would they stand idly by while social and affordable housing units are awarded access ahead of them? Indeed, would they stand idly by if there was a marked increase in the number of secondary dwellings on properties currently on the NSSW system?

I sympathize with the need for affordable housing. But a convenient reinterpretation of the trust mandate to encompass human settlement is ill-advised. We are ignoring some serious threats to our island environment in favour of campaigning for affordable housing solutions and changing our Islands Trust mandate, without consultation I might add, to address a problem that is national, even international, in scope - and for all we know, temporary.

sincerely,

Mavis MacMillen
[REDACTED]