

May 9, 2007

Ministry of Community Services
P.O. Box 9838 Stn Provincial Government
4th floor 800 Johnson Street
Victoria, V8N 9N7

Subject: Opposition to Application 17304 Senanus Watermain
British Columbia Rural Infrastructure Fund Grant Program

As residents of Central Saanich we are opposed to the recent application for an infrastructure grant to fund piped water to 20 homes in the rural Senanus area. Not only is this proposal contrary to our Official Community Plan and the Regional Growth Strategy but local alternatives have not been seriously explored. A few years ago, the District tried to apply for green infrastructure funding to study the development of a local water system for Senanus. At that time, local residents (Central Saanich West Voters Assoc. CSWVA) opposed even a study of local alternatives.*

Historically, health concerns have been presented as one of the motivations for piped water to the Senanus area and discussions regarding these concerns have been controversial. However, a very detailed water quality assessment undertaken in 1999 by Lowen**, a respected, independent hydro-geologist, found no evidence of bacteriological or harmful chemical contamination in the Senanus aquifer.

Further troubling to us is a recent water study by Bullock Baur***, reporting that piped water to this rural area will accommodate an additional 127 residences. We are absolutely opposed to the urban sprawl pressure that piped water will attract to an area of our community designated for rural densities. The financial viability of our rural district can not withstand the on-going maintenance of further large sprawling infrastructure projects. In addition, if piped water is granted now, sewage infrastructure is not far behind as the septic systems of these waterfront mansion homes may well be compromised by the increased water usage. We understand this is the current experience in North Saanich.

Senanus residents (CSWVA) have also linked fire protection to piped water availability. The Bullock Baur*** report states that the proposed water system to the Senanus area will not offer a water flow rate that provides adequate fire protection to the residences there. So, not only does the current proposal encourage urban sprawl but also it is unable to offer fire protection for that sprawl.

Finally, as a rural municipality, Central Saanich has an Official Community Plan that directs residential growth to designated settlement areas where infrastructure currently exists and can be shared by many residences (including on-going maintenance and replacement). This grant request is for the benefit of only 20 properties, all located in an area zoned rural estate, where the current level of services is in keeping with that zoning. This is a very mixed message that does not serve our community's future from either development or financial perspectives.

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Although this grant application was passed at a properly constituted council meeting, it was supported by a bare minimum of council i.e. 3 councillors voted in support, 2 councillors voted against and 2 councillors had declared a conflict of interest. We believe there is minimum support for this major infrastructure expansion in our District.

We ask you not to fund this current grant application and, rather, encourage the District and Senanus residents (CSWVA) to research and implement local solutions that have been recommended in reputable past studies. This can be an opportunity for our governments to promote environmentally sound and financially sustainable community projects.

Thank you for your attention to our serious concerns.

Sincerely

Kurt Grillowitz, Vice Chair for
Central Saanich Ratepayers Association

cc: Mayor and Councillors of the District of Central Saanich

Murray Coell, MLA, Saanich North and the Islands

Attached for your reference (3):

* Letter to Federation of Municipalities re: GMEF Proposal from Central Saanich Municipality, October 30, 2000, from Frank Towler, President, Central Saanich West Voters Assoc.

** Conclusions of Senanus Drive Well Water Quality Study, June 11, 1999, prepared by Dennis A. Lowen, P. Eng., P. Geo., of Lowen Hydrogeology Consulting

*** Supplement to the Senanus Drive Watermain Study, December 13, 2006, prepared by Bullock Baur, Civil Engineering, Community Infrastructure Project Management