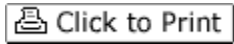




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Peninsula News Review

Water a question of context

By Christine van Reeuwyk - Peninsula News Review

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Water a question of context

Central Saanich agreed to look at its Regional Context Statement, but is still discussing how to proceed.

Earlier this month, it agreed to move forward in the process to amend the Regional Context Statement in the Official Community Plan to ensure consistency with the the CRD's Regional Growth Strategy. The amendment would surround extension of sewer and water services in urban containment servicing areas to address fire suppression, environmental issues and health concerns.

The Regional Context Statement in the Central Saanich OCP says the district does not extend urban services such as the sewer and water system into rural or agricultural lands. The CRD's Regional Growth Strategy has statements allows for flexibility, outlining exceptions — such as for health or fire suppression reasons.

When presented with the option of passing the first few readings of the bylaw needed to change the wording, council had more questions. It would add the words “except to address pressing public health or environmental issues or to provide water for agricultural or fire suppression uses.”

The definition of things like “pressing health concerns” were a cause of concern for councillor Alastair Bryson.

“I'd like to know how we'd be making that determination,” Bryson said. “At this point there is no definition and it's open to interpretation. That's a significant cause of concern when it has to do with urban containment in the district.”

Councillor Chris Graham noted that Central Saanich could investigate whether VIHA or the Ministry of Environment already has some form of definition or criteria.

“I think we could probably put something together fairly quickly,” he said. “I would feel very uncomfortable moving forward on this without criteria.”

Councillor Zeb King questioned the need for the district to change the policy,

“It is possible for Central Saanich as a municipality to have a stronger Regional Context Statement,” King

said.

“I don’t think it’s as significant as it’s being made out to be,” said councillor John Garrison. He pointed out that there are water lines all through the municipality, including in rural lands.

“The rigidity is what got us into the problem we have today ... there has to be some flexibility.”

Graham made a motion that staff create criteria but there was no support around the table. He followed up the idea of deferring to a future meeting when the full council would be in attendance (councillor Bob Thompson was away). That motion was supported and the issue will come forward in the future.

Mayor Jack Mar indicated that any changes could take up to two years with the CRD involved.

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