



Ranter's Roost

A place to rant. Sometimes we'll rant, sometimes you'll get to rant. Just send us your rant (about anything) of 500 words or less, and we may, if our socks are blown off by it, publish it. Send submissions to editor@peninsulatimes.ca

Senanus Waterline: Bureaucracy in Action Sean McNulty

The residents of Senanus Drive have been trying to obtain clean potable water for over 15 years now. The inaction from the municipality of Central Saanich on this issue is an example of bureaucracy in action. There have been endless engineer reports, studies, legal opinions and other roadblocks thrown in the way, while residents continue to truck in water from the Sooke Lake Reservoir at a rate of one water truck per week.

The water quality on Senanus Drive started to become an issue when neighbouring hay farms began digging additional wells to provide more water for their fields. Hay fields without water only yield one crop per year, whereas those with water can yield three. A side effect of this additional watering: depletion of the aquifer resulting in a loss of hydrostatic pressure and increased mineralization and saltwater intrusion into the wells. This happened to such an extent that the Capital Regional District's (CRD's) Chief Medical Officer deemed the water from the wells on Senanus **unsafe for consumption**.

The main argument against extending the waterline is that it will lead to development, but nothing could be further from the truth.

There are waterlines running throughout the municipality and development doesn't automatically follow them. In fact, the zoning was changed on Senanus Drive so that even with the waterline extension the minimum lot size allowed is five acres which means any subdivision would require rezoning.

It's particularly interesting the extent some members of mayor and council, both past and present, have gone to stop this waterline.

Another argument against the waterline is that it contradicts the Regional Context Statement in the Central Saanich OCP and the CRD's Regional Growth Strategy (RGS). This doesn't hold water. For one, these are to regu-

late growth; the houses are existing, and two, the RGS outlines exceptions for health and fire reasons, both of which apply to this situation.

It's particularly interesting the extent some members of mayor and council, both past and present, have gone to stop this waterline. In 2002, the residents on Senanus offered to pay for the entire thing. At the time, under Bylaw 524, if they were to pay for it the municipality would be required to provide the service. Amazingly, the mayor and council at that time then amended the bylaw, in only six weeks, which removed the obligation.

The residents forged ahead despite this setback, drawing up a petition that showed overwhelming support from the area for the waterline. The municipality then accused the residents of using coercive tactics to get the signatures, with no proof! Not to mention that during all of this, the costs for installation increased from \$800,000 to \$1.6 million.

The petition has since been submitted, a grant has been applied for and approved for \$1.1 million, and it appears the residents of Senanus Drive will finally receive potable drinking water barring any unwise decisions by the current mayor and council. Interestingly, the majority of councilors get their water through the municipal waterlines; it's time for them to allow their fellow residents access as well. ■