

Main may see new petition

Council expected to discuss direction of Mount Newton/Senanus water project Monday night

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News staff

The options appear endless in Central Saanich, but none are what waterline proponents or opponents want.

Council was presented with some numbers involved in upgrading the proposed water main for Mount Newton X and Senanus roads to minimal fire suppression levels. Council previously passed a motion to move forward with the basic provision of water in the area and had staff draft the first bylaw to establish a local service area.

Municipal staff previously recommended that council not move forward with readings of the bylaw before seeing the numbers in the report. Monday night, when that report was presented, they recommended not moving forward with that bylaw at all.

Staff presented a new trio of options for council to consider, providing the majority of council was still in favour of moving forward with a pipeline project.

Council could proceed with readings of the first bylaw and continue with the project as planned, but staff do not recommend that option, said Chief Administrative Officer Gary Nason. He added that the district did get solicitor's advice that the petition, despite the risen costs (up to \$1.75 million from \$1.69 million) of the project as proposed, is still valid.

Added to the rising costs are residents in the service area who have asked to have their names removed from the petition (which they cannot), as well as issues surrounding the grant application, petition process and exploration of other water options raised by those opposed to the current water main plan.

The second option is to refer the matter to a dispute resolution process. That would require council to agree to some terms of reference, such as clear indication of the form of the project they wish to proceed with.

The third option, is to re-petition the community, with the numbers and information provided by the consultant for basic water and minimal fire suppression capabilities.

Residents who have been asking for the project to proceed for more than a decade were unimpressed with the new direction.

"Fifteen years ago it was a \$600,000 project that included hydrants," said Frank Towler, adding that people in area see potable water as the priority. "We see no point in looking at options that require more money."

He added that there have been three successful petitions in the area.

"We don't want to do this again, we want to get on with it," Towler said. In this economy, he added, everyone is looking for projects like this that are "shovel ready".

"It took six months [for this petition] to be deemed by the administration to be sufficient," added Karen Knott.

Council opted to take the week to look over the information and revisit, and possibly make a decision, during the Monday, March 2 council meeting, when it's expected all of council will be in attendance. Councillor Ron Kubek was absent from the committee meeting.

Councillor Alastair Bryson continued the practice of leaving during the water main discussions citing possible conflict of interest. He owns property near, and farms in, the proposed service area.