

Central Saanich approves water line extension

BY RICHARD WATTS, TIMES COLONIST APRIL 7, 2009

Central Saanich councillors voted yesterday to extend a municipal water line and end the drought of potable water to residents who've suffered for years from failing wells.

Councillors voted to organize the 64 homes along Mount Newton X Road and Senanus Drive into a local service area to receive and pay for municipal water. The move delighted the residents who have reported failing wells as far back as the 1980s.

The wells, mostly along Senanus Drive, run dry in late summer and fall. In many cases, the water is so brackish that it corrodes pipes and has been declared unfit for domestic use.

"It looks like we are getting where we need to be," said Frank Towler, a resident of Senanus Drive.

The 1.75-kilometre extension of the pipeline is estimated to cost about \$1.69 million.

Two thirds of that cost will be paid for by the provincial and federal governments. The remaining third will be paid by the taxpayers in the 64 homes.

Those homeowners will pay an estimated \$810 extra on their municipal taxes for 15 years or a one-time cost of \$8,530.

That extra cost on the tax bill has angered residents, most of them along Mt. Newton X Road, who say their wells still function.

"I believe in solving my own problems. I'm not asking my neighbours to solve them for me," said Mount Newton resident Bob Bocking, who has a well that supplies water that he filters and treats for himself.

Bocking said a meeting for residents like him is planned to discuss a follow-up move. Most recently, complaints have emerged about a 2007 petition that prompted council to act. Veiled threats of a lawsuit have been made.

Those lawsuit threats prompted Coun. Susan Mason to vote against the proposal in favor of running another petition. "I think we need to give them clean water with a clean process."

But Mayor Jack Mar has long contended the issue is simple and should be taken for granted in the 21st century: Potable water for people who need it.

And "the residents down on Senanus Drive said their water was not potable," said Mar.

He said the pipeline must go to tender before it is constructed but if everything proceeds smoothly, municipal water could be flowing as early as this fall.

Gordon Denford, a resident of Senanus Drive, has recently offered to donate, for \$1, the services of his own construction company to act as project managers.

Denford has also guaranteed his firm can do the job for \$1.49 million and said he believes it likely will be even less.

Mar said Denford's offer will have to be considered as part of the tender process.

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