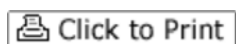


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Peninsula News Review

Water worries flow again

By Christine van Reeuwijk - Peninsula News Review

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The Mount Newton Neighborhood Association is following through on legal threats.

As the proposed watermain for Senanus and Mount Newton X Roads came to fruition in Central Saanich council chambers, the MNNA asked council to consider mediation between the two sides — and was denied. The association made it clear legal proceedings would follow.

Earlier this week, they made good on the promise; the MNNA filed in the Supreme Court of British Columbia for a Judicial Review against a recent District of Central Saanich decision.

“We did receive the document this morning [Monday],” said Central Saanich Mayor Jack Mar. “It’s going through the process ... It’s up to council to decide one way or the other what to do about it.”

Because it’s before the courts, and council will be dealing with it in camera, Mar wouldn’t say more.

“It wasn’t unexpected, they’ve been threatening this,” said water main proponent Gordon Denford, who lives on Senanus Drive. “I see it as an attempt to deny people the right to potable water ... The bottom line is they’re not prepared to pay for their share of the

costs.”

“We’re asking for the bylaw 1625 to be quashed,” explained Chris Paynter of the MNNA.

Council moved forward with the bylaw to create the area of service for the pipeline project along Mount Newton X and Senanus roads. “We’re asking to quash that and declare the petition as insufficient,” Paynter said.

They believe the petition was garnered on false grounds, saying some people were told there would be fire prevention, which would lower insurance costs, when asked to sign the petition. Municipal staff previously confirmed that some residents sought to have their names removed from the petition, after it was declared legally valid.

“We haven’t felt like we’ve got any traction with the district in putting forth our concerns with the water line,” said Paynter. “All the complaints that we’ve put into our petition to the court, we’ve expressed to the district many, many times.”

MNNA’s Supreme Court petition asserts that the petition supporting the bylaw is flawed and insufficient. Central Saanich council heard earlier this year from municipal staff, that the petition was deemed legally valid.

“There are a number of concerns, one of them is the fact that there doesn’t seem to be any environmental studies done to see if there would be any detrimental damage done,” Paynter said, noting the road is of heritage importance.

“There has been no consultation with the local First Nations,” he added. As well, there’s feeling by MNNA members that the costs are being unfairly assessed.

“There’s a very large taxation inequity we feel,” Paynter said. “And we very strongly object to the way the petition was garnered in the first place ... The process itself was, we feel, very flawed.”

Last April council rescinded the motion that would see staff create the necessary bylaws to move the proposed Senanus/Mount Newton waterline project forward. That was to allow for a wording change in the Regional Context Statement of the Central Saanich Official Community Plan to be consistent with the Capital Regional District and allow for extending water and sewer outside the urban settlement area for health or fire suppression reasons. The MNNA contends that “pressing public health concerns” have never been identified in the area.

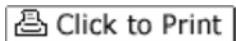
“How can you treat water you don’t have when the majority of the wells dry up in the summer,” Denford said. “What water is produced has high sodium content and is unpalatable ... the aquifer is so depleted and agrologists have said we should never have had wells on Senanus because of the topography.

“The only solution is to have the waterline extended, which is a line we all pay for as a community effort,” he added. “We’re going to be fighting for this. We’ve fought for 16 years for clean water.”

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