

Submission from Bernie Ziegler, Saturna Island, July 17th, 2011

At the recent Saturna Island Community Groundwater Workshop on May 7, 2011, which was organized by the Islands Trust and attended by more than 70 islanders and the two local trustees, the overwhelming consensus of the participants, as expressed in mediator Ron Monk's recap of the meeting, was that effective solutions to groundwater problems on Saturna need to come from the community itself. Not only were the two local trustees present, they were accompanied by the third trustee, who acts as the off-island chair of the Local Trust Committee (LTC) and by Gary Richardson, the Island Trust planner. The vast majority of participants were in agreement that the community would work together to solve the groundwater problem. Or so we thought.

At the following Saturna Island Local Trust Committee meeting on June 22, 2011, a little more than a month after the Groundwater Workshop, Trustee Neff, with the support of Chair Luckham, who hails from Thetis Island and who represents the agenda of the Trust Executive on the Local Trust Committee, proposed Bylaw 104, an addendum to Bylaw 99, which applies to water storage on East Point. This Bylaw 104 addendum specifies, in paragraph 2.18.2, "*a building permit shall not be issued for a storage building unless it is equipped with a water catchment system and cistern(s) for the storage of rainwater. A minimum storage capacity of 2,590 litres (1000 gallons) is required.*" *Bylaw 104 received first reading.*

First, I note that planner Richardson apparently missed math class in Grade 5 when metric conversion was covered. No one is perfect. This lack of rigor, however, leads me to believe that this one-size-fits-all bylaw was hastily put together without any thought as to its accuracy and its impact. What about people who already have rainwater storage on their property, but want to build a storage shed? Do we really want to replace trees with plastic water tank farms in areas of Saturna that do not have a water problem or already have extensive groundwater protection measures in place? Do we want to encourage people to bypass the building permit process? Yes, of course, you can always apply for a variance. On Saturna the cost of a variance is \$990.00 (plus HST) and the process takes at least two months, and there's no guarantee that you will get a variance after all that.

What's just as important to me is that this proposed bylaw totally ignores the wishes expressed by the people of Saturna during the Community Water Workshop. What's even more interesting about Bylaw 104 is that it would apply to all of Saturna, and not be restricted to the East Point area covered by Schedule C of Bylaw 99. Is this what they call "mission creep" in the military?

The timing and sloppiness of Bylaw 104 make me suspect that the Community Groundwater Workshop was nothing but a cynical public relations exercise, conducted at taxpayers' expense, to soften up the local rubes into believing that they actually have a voice. After spending our money on a mediator, hall rental, travel, staff overtime (the meeting was held on a Saturday), and – most importantly – getting some 70 island property owners to spend an entire day indoors, patiently waiting their turn to express their opinion, in the belief that their view would actually have an impact, Island Trust is reverting to form.

In my opinion, this is an attempt to ram through, before the November elections, at least part of the Trust executive's green agenda on Saturna, after the sound defeat of the ham-fisted Saturna Bylaw 102. The belief among the upper echelons of the Islands Trust seems to be that the peasants need to be told what's good for them, that they are misguided or too dumb to fully appreciate the wonderful aims of the Trust's green programme. The rustics will come around once they are suitably re-educated by their betters. It's significant that Trustee Neff told me, in front of witnesses, that her job is not to represent the interests of the people of Saturna but those of the Trust. She also let on that she does not make decisions, that those are made by the Planner. Is that the kind of representation we want? If we don't wake up, maybe this is what we deserve.

It is a good thing that the November elections are rapidly approaching and we can express our wishes at the ballot box to elect representatives with more common sense and less of a fringe agenda.

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