



**Noba Anderson, Director**  
**Cortes– Electoral Area 'B'**

Tel: 250-935-0320 E-mail: [director@cortesisland.com](mailto:director@cortesisland.com)

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Dear Fellow SRD Board members  
January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2019

**Re: Letters Received into the Public Record**

The issue of receiving letters from constituents outside of a director's own electoral area or municipality and, although allowing them to strongly influence decisions made at the board, not submitting them into the public record has been a long standing concern of mine.

One director in particular has received letters for years from Cortes residents, often bringing this up at board meetings, and has often been deeply swayed by a single piece of correspondence, choosing to not submit these for receipt claiming the need to protect the author's privacy. Although this director has been asked by multiple Board Chairs and Chief Administrative Officers to stop this practice, it persists. I know that many other directors have also, I trust to a lesser extent, received letters from Cortes residents, letters often not copied to myself (their elected representative) that influence decisions and yet do not submit them into the minutes.

Although I have, on near countless occasions over the years, asked for this practice to stop, it has not. I believe that this practice is not only unethical and goes against all sensibility of open and transparent government, but that it has also eroded the credibility of directors and indeed now the board as a whole.

When a constituent does not get their desired results by communicating with their elected representative (who understands the many facets and perspectives of their community) and rather finds a sympathetic ear with other directors who do not have this same context, nor are directly accountable for their decisions affecting another jurisdiction, the democratic process begins to erode. A handful of my constituents have used this approach with much success, contributing to the development of quite a situation.

It is now time that I go on the written record asking that we as a Board cease this practice of allowing people, anonymous to the board, whose writings are never known to the public, to influence our decisions. I am requesting that all such letters be submitted for receipt at the board with names attached. In the event that a director sees fit to protect the privacy of an author, I would ask then that the letters be submitted with the personal information redacted so that at least the content of the letters can be known and debated.

This practice hit peak influence in November 2018 when letters submitted to may Board members, as shared by many of you at the meeting, greatly influenced the Board's choice to rescind a previous decision with regard to the assent process for two proposed Cortes

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services. I ask that to begin this new practice of increased accountability and transparency, that all directors who received letters from Cortes residents on this matter in the fall submit them into the Board minutes. I made this verbal request at our December 2018 meeting and I am now following it up in writing. I here offer the two letters that I received at the time, as well as the newspaper article about the issue.

Thank-you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Noba', followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Noba Anderson, Regional Director

## Tom Yates

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**From:** Noba Anderson <director@cortesisland.com>  
**Sent:** December 6, 2018 9:52 AM  
**To:** Tom Yates; Edith Watson; SRD Board Chair  
**Subject:** Fwd: proposal regarding hall tax on cortes island

Please print copies for the board today

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Shirley Dawn** <[subtledawn@gmail.com](mailto:subtledawn@gmail.com)>

Date: Sun, Nov 18, 2018 at 6:06 PM

Subject: proposal regarding hall tax on cortes island

To: <[TYates@srd.ca](mailto:TYates@srd.ca)>, <[grbunger@conumacable.com](mailto:grbunger@conumacable.com)>, <[gdwhalley@saywardvalley.net](mailto:gdwhalley@saywardvalley.net)>, Noba Anderson <[director@cortesisland.com](mailto:director@cortesisland.com)>, <[jimabram@xplornet.ca](mailto:jimabram@xplornet.ca)>, <[bleigh.53@gmail.com](mailto:bleigh.53@gmail.com)>, <[islandwishes@yahoo.ca](mailto:islandwishes@yahoo.ca)>, <[councillor.cornfield@campbellriver.ca](mailto:councillor.cornfield@campbellriver.ca)>, <[councillor.kerr@campbellriver.ca](mailto:councillor.kerr@campbellriver.ca)>, <[mayor.adams@campbellriver.ca](mailto:mayor.adams@campbellriver.ca)>, <[mayor@saywardvalley.ca](mailto:mayor@saywardvalley.ca)>, <[councillor.samson@campbellriver.ca](mailto:councillor.samson@campbellriver.ca)>, <[boverton@villageoftahsis.com](mailto:boverton@villageoftahsis.com)>

To the board members of the Strathcona Regional District:

I am concerned that there is a proposal being made in support of a hall tax on Cortes Island without anyone there to also represent those property owners on Cortes Island who do not support the creation of a Hall Tax. This means the Board of Directors will be hearing a one sided, biased proposal.

There has not been adequate information provided to the Cortes community, or adequate consultation with property owners about the proposed Hall Tax for property owners to make an informed decision. We don't know how much a referendum will cost the community, or who will be allowed to take part in the referendum.

I have a number of questions and concerns regarding the proposed hall tax which need to be addressed before any official referendum on a hall tax takes place.

1) Will non-property owners be allowed to vote on the proposed hall tax?

It would be inappropriate and unjust for those who do not own property to have any say in the creation of a tax that only property owners will have to pay.

2) Why are the Cortes Community halls not able to financially support their own services? It should be noted that 15 years ago the Mansons Hall was a vibrant active part of the community with a busy cafe and many regular events taking place. What has changed since then that the Hall is now unable to support itself?

3) What services does the community hall offer to the community?

The hall used to allow people to fill water if they needed it there, and also used to provide community internet access. These were the two really essential services that used to be provided by the Manson's Community hall. Now they do not allow people to fill water and have stopped providing free internet access. The Mansons Hall also used to house the Public Library. When it was discovered that the room the library was in needed some renovations the Library was moved and never brought back after the renovations were completed. The library is now in an inaccessible location far away from the hall, which has drastically reduced the amount of traffic coming into the hall. The cafe that used to operate under a lease in the Manson's Hall was also very busy all the time. However now the Hall chooses to employ a cook rather than lease the space to a successful business owner. There was no advertising or applications accepted for the cook position, instead the position was personally offered to specific people in the community who are not capable

of producing food that is palatable to a variety of people. These kinds of decisions made by those operating the Manson's Hall have led to a decrease in both income and in community interest over the years.

This kind of mismanagement is what needs to be addressed before property owners are expected to step in and prop up a failing enterprise that does not provide essential services that all community members can or will benefit from. For these reasons I am strongly opposed to the hall tax and to any referendum related to a hall tax taking place.

Please consider polling property owners about whether or no they want to vote on a hall tax. The results from the referendum question included in our general election do not represent the wishes of property owners, but rather a number of people in the community who do not own property, or who have only lived in the community for a short time and have not witnessed this decline in the hall's income due to poor management and lousy decision making.

I look forward to receiving some answers to my questions, especially regarding whether or not non-property owners will be allowed to vote on a tax that they will not have to pay.

Sincerely,

Shirley Agopsowicz  
property owner on Cortes Island.

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Director, Noba Anderson  
Cortes Island, Area B  
Strathcona Regional District  
[director@cortesisland.com](mailto:director@cortesisland.com)  
Tel: 250-935-0320

## Tom Yates

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**Subject:** FW: Area B Bylaws 341 and 328

**From:** Noba Anderson <director@cortesisland.com>

**Sent:** December 6, 2018 9:55 AM

**To:** Tom Yates <TYates@srd.ca>; Edith Watson <EWatson@srd.ca>; SRD Board Chair <schair@strathconard.ca>

**Subject:** Fwd: Area B Bylaws 341 and 328

and this one too please for print

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Debra T.** <[debratwhaletown@gmail.com](mailto:debratwhaletown@gmail.com)>

Date: Thu, Nov 22, 2018 at 11:03 AM

Subject: Area B Bylaws 341 and 328

To: <[tyates@strathconard.ca](mailto:tyates@strathconard.ca)>

To Mr. Yates, Mr. Leitch and the SRD Directors-

I have concerns regarding Bylaws 341 and 328. What is behind the intent to do all three readings on Thursday, November 22, 2018, when the community hasn't been consulted nor made aware of the reasoning behind the content of the bylaws?

I realize that both Bylaws are moving forward as a result of the non-binding referendum held October 20, 2018. However, myself, and I understand many, many, others (on both sides of both issues), expected that there would be at least one opportunity to provide input and receive information before the bylaws were drafted. I certainly expected that the SRD would provide an accounting of the dollar amounts being asked for. I personally would feel much more confident going into a binding referendum with all the relevant information required to make an informed decision. And right now, I don't have it.

Using the First Responder Service as an example, because it is a lot simpler than the Community Hall Service, how were the maximum dollar amounts for the bylaw determined? The First Responder Service is set at a maximum of \$45,000 per year. Originally, I understood the subsequent years would have a lesser maximum, in the \$25,000 range. The information I have, and as I understand it, is that the \$7000 (half of \$14,000) referendum cost would come out of the maximum \$45,000. Tuition for First Responder Level 3 courses at the Justice Institute, is \$800 <https://catalogue.jibc.ca/Lists/Courses/CustomDispForm.aspx?ID=1235&InitialTabId= Ribbon.Read> . At the Red Cross, it is \$600. The Cortes Fire Fighters Association (CIFFA) has said that they have already purchased the required equipment. If ten people are trained the first year, that's \$8000. If they are given a \$100 per diem training allowance, for six days, we can add another \$6000 (I've read that these courses are often offered in places other than the lower mainland, even places such as Lasqueti Island, see here <http://www.powellriverrd.bc.ca/community-services-2/fire-protection-services/lasqueti-island-volunteer-fire-department/> So now we are at \$21,000. Does the SRD then take money for administering the service? Does SRD staff arrive at the \$45,000 or did CIFFA? Does CIFFA use any excess money in any given year, at their discretion? If people are willing to provide this important service, why haven't residents been given the opportunity to see the numbers?

The Community Hall Service is much more complex. I would think it would require much time, research and accounting to arrive at a fair number. With two halls involved, who divvies up the money? Are the SCCA and WCC boards going to work in tandem? Are they responsible for dividing the money, prioritizing projects, putting contracts out for bids? What is the subsequent reporting? If large donations are received, such as for the recent donation of a new roof at the SCCA, will the tax be adjusted in that year? Will the aim be to spend all the money every year?

Last fall, the SCCA posted (on Tideline) this (see below) regarding increasing membership fees:

**3) Why do you not increase the cost of memberships so users pay for the hall?**

Our community support is strong, this fiscal year we have a total of 235 members, bringing in revenue of 1665.00 to the Charity. We will consider raising membership rates at next years AGM, with the consent of our current members. If we double our membership rates, we would bring in an equivalent amount, however, this places a disproportionate additional burden on the 235 members who support the Charity through membership, and the amount raised will represent barely 6.11% of our operating deficit.

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The SCCA website lists current fees at \$15 for a family and \$10 for an individual. I don't believe the amount changed. "Disproportionate additional burden." If the Community Hall Service passes at referendum, at the current SCCA proposed rate of \$.22/\$1000, many, many people will be paying much more than 10 or 15 dollars regardless of whether they choose to be part of the SCCA. It concerns me that a community association does not see the hypocrisy of this scenario. And the sweeping notion (among some) that all landowners on Cortes have more wealth than those who do not, is just not so.

These are just some of my concerns and questions, and questions I feel worthy of answers. Why not hold off on second and third readings, hold a public meeting or publish some information, engage with the community, help people understand the intricacies of establishing these services. Adding additional taxes, in perpetuity, is no small matter. Now that we are here, what is the rush?

Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to any answers any of you can provide.

Debra Thompson  
Box 56  
Whaletown, BC

Sent from my iPad

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Director, Noba Anderson  
Cortes Island, Area B



The Cortes Island Fire Department wants to expand its service to include first response for medical emergencies. This issue is one of the referenda planned for the community following a non-binding vote in the fall. File photo/Campbell River Mirror

# Cortes referenda won't proceed as quickly as some hope

## SCCA wants parcel tax taken off table as option to raise revenue

MIKE CHOUINARD / Nov. 28, 2018 1:30 a.m. / LOCAL NEWS / NEWS

It might take a little longer for two referenda on Cortes Island to go before voters.

Area B Director Noba Anderson, who sits on the Strathcona Regional District board, had hoped to have residents vote as soon as possible in order to get the items into the next SRD budget, should they each pass a binding referendum.

“We’ve been at this for nine years on Cortes now,” she said. “We have gone through so much due process on this one.... The work has been done, the bylaws are prepared.”

One referendum question concerns a tax to support first responder training for the fire department.

**RELATED STORY:** [Cortes Island emergency response service goes to referendum](#)

The second is to establish the hall tax to support operations for two Cortes Island groups that provide community programming. Each received ample support during a non-binding vote in tandem with the fall local government elections – a so-called “referendum on the referendum” – to be brought forward again.

**RELATED STORY:** [Cortes Island binding referenda to proceed in tandem](#)

The plan through the hall tax is to raise \$75,000 a year for the groups to use to help with operating costs and programming. However, in response to a request from a local community associations, Anderson suggested deleting a reference to the possibility of a parcel tax as a means to generate revenue for community hall operations.

At the latest SRD board meeting, directors had concerns about the pace of putting the bylaws through to go to referendum, with several wanting to give the public more opportunities in light of changes proposed to how the hall tax would be generated, such as removing the parcel tax as an option.

Area C Director Jim Abram said it was not realistic to try to get the questions to referendum and have them included in the 2019 budget cycle.

“The bylaws are not complete, they’re not ready,” he said. “I don’t know why we’re so intent on doing them right now.”



Area D Director Brenda Leigh echoed this, saying the SRD board should take into account opinions from those opposed. She said she had heard concerns from Cortes residents via email.

“I don’t think that’s fair to people, to the taxpayers. I think they should have the opportunity,” she said.

Leigh also said she wished to deal with each referendum bylaw separately.

“I may vote differently on each of them,” she said.

Charlie Cornfield, one of the Campbell River directors, said the changes proposed at the Nov. 22 meeting were coming forth from a director’s report rather than an SRD staff report.

Read more below

“This is not the normal way we would do business,” he said. “Normally, it would be a staff report... not something that a director has written up. That’s why we hire staff.”

Director Andy Adams thanked the Cortes delegation that had presented on the issue and credited Anderson for her work but felt the matter needed more public input.

Earlier in the meeting, representatives from one of the community groups, the Southern Cortes Community Association, spoke to the board about what they would like to see, specifically removing a parcel tax as an option and using the mill rate, based on property values, for the tax.

Ultimately, the board voted to give the first and second readings of the bylaws for the issues to go to the public for input before any referenda take place. The board also accepted a motion by Adams to refer to staff to work out all details for the hall tax bylaw. He also wanted staff to prepare a draft policy to consistently address public input into the process.

“I think we need to tighten up our policies,” he said, adding, “We need a clear and concise and agreed-upon procedure and policy.”

## **SCCA OPTS FOR MILL RATE**

For a hall tax, the Southern Cortes Community Association (SCCA) has considered two ways of generating revenue to support hall operations on Cortes Island, for themselves and another group, the Whaletown Community Club.

### **RELATED STORY: Cortes Island to vote on hall tax idea in fall elections**

Myrna Kerr, SCCA vice-president and secretary, and John Sprungman, past president, appeared before the Strathcona Regional District board on Nov. 22 to outline why they feel a tax tied to the mill rate is a better option than a parcel tax.

“We are here because we support a hall tax for Cortes Island,” Kerr said. “We have come to you before, and I believe that what we’ve done this time is to provide you with a lot of information.”

The SCCA’s Sprungman was one of the original organizers of the petition that came before the SRD board last year and said the wish now was to eliminate a parcel tax. Instead, the SCCA hopes to generate revenue using the mill rate based on assessment values for properties.

He outlined the rationale for using the mill rate based on assessed values on the roughly 1,000 parcels of property on Cortes. The average assessment is currently approximately \$345,000, which would mean a mill rate of \$0.22 per \$1,000 of property value.

“We’re suggesting this is a fairer way to tax,” Sprungman said. “It’s also consistent with the way all of our other local services are taxed.”

He found out from BC Assessment that 255 parcels have no improvements on them, which means the owners would have to pay the same tax as everyone under a parcel tax system.

“All those owners would have to pay the same thing as the people who actually have property there and live on it or rent it out. That seemed kind of unfair in that regard,” he said.

As well, there are other parcels that have multiple dwellings on them, which would mean the suggested \$75 parcel would be reduced to much less for each household than for someone with one home on a property.

Sprungman said there are other considerations for SRD such as potential administrative costs in the form of a parcel tax review.

“I can bet you that on Cortes Island, a lot of people would appeal having to pay even \$75, if they didn’t think they were benefiting from it,” he said.

He hoped to the regional district would be able to proceed with the bylaw and referendum quickly to help generate the funds for the groups this year.

“Our community associations are both struggling with these core expenses,” he said.