
West Sechelt Community Association

Spring 2020 Newsletter

www.westsecheltca.com



In this issue of the West Sechelt Community Association Spring Newsletter we welcome spring and its optimism, something we could do more of during these uncertain times. The newsletter reports on new community matters of concern, updates on previous community issues and presents feature articles from our members. Two WSCA members have written informative articles on one of our most pressing problems other than CoVid-19, our water supply while others have contributed pieces on safe ways to stay well and help others during the pandemic. We hope you find this issue enjoyable and beneficial.

Contents

1. [Property Development](#)
2. [Water Supply, Alternatives, Restrictions & Charges](#)
3. [Water at What Cost?](#)
4. [Parking at West Sechelt Elementary School](#)
5. [Wakefield Sewers Update](#)
6. [Wakefield Lift Station](#)
7. [Walking West Sechelt for Wellness](#)
8. [Why garden during a coronavirus lockdown?](#)
9. [Neighbourhood Connect](#)
10. [WSCA Yard Sale](#)
11. [West Sechelt Elementary Parade](#)

Property Development

Mills Rd: A proposal to rezone for development a property on Mills Rd from R3 to R1 has been approved by the DOS Advisory Planning Committee. The WSCA expects a referral soon from the DOS Planning department to consider the proposed subdivision of the land into 4 lots. Once all referrals have been received, the decision for the change in zoning and the development of the land will go back to DOS for final approval.

Trellis/Silverstone Long Term Care Development: WSCA responded to a DOS request for the Trellis long term care facility development proposal to be located on Derby Rd. WSCA submitted a response indicating our concerns regarding the discrepancy between the Official Community Plan text and graphic for the area. We also expressed concerns regarding transportation access routes to the facility and recommended that the DOS carry out a robust engagement process with the residents of the Silverstone and Clayton properties.

Water Supply, Restrictions and Utility Charges

Al Jenkins, WSCA Director

Water continues to be a central concern for many of us whether it be the water supply, water conservation requirements or charges for water use. To clarify a point in passing, many believe the District of Sechelt provides us with our water. To help set the record straight the Sunshine Coast Regional District bears that responsibility. In terms of summer supply SCRD water remains an urgent issue until a short-term solution is in place. We understand that the reservoir contract is moving forward to the next planning stage. The Church Road wells and connection expansion has increased the cost to upwards of \$10 million. To finance this project an Alternate Approval Process (AAP) is one solution. However, as the Covid19 problem falls within BC Ministry of Health jurisdiction the Province may impede this process. Several additional drill sites are being examined with contracts pending for exploratory drilling at Gray Creek. Generally speaking, wells and connections could run \$10 million each. It does not appear that sourcing Clowhom Lake, as was suggested to the SCRD by a local group, is being considered. When all new sourcing is added together we could end up with a bill approaching \$100 million (possibly what Clowhom could cost) and still be relying on aquifers for short term supply. Water Governance is more urgently required now than ever.

Many of us are shocked by the increase in our 2020 utility bill. Most of this increase is justified with the necessary infrastructure upgrades. Residential water billing is set according to the number of dwelling units per parcel, at least until, or if metered billing becomes universal. The number of occupants does not enter the equation. However, there may be a discrepancy between the number of residences that report, hence the possible use of more water than a single-family residence. This process seems unfair and open for misinterpretation and has been brought to the attention of the SCRD Staff and Board. The SCRD Finance Dept have been requested to provide the percentage of clients with more than one unit.



Water at What Cost?

Geoff Bedford, WSCA member

I think that 2020 will be the last year of drastic water shortages and restrictions. It might even be an OK year if we get some amount of rain in July, August, and September. The reason I think that it will be the last hard year, is that in 2021, the Church Road well system should be coming on stream, and that system by itself, should solve 40% of our water shortage problem. In addition, the SCRD will be actively looking to increase the output from the

Langdale wells, which would be added into the system as well as Church Road. This will be at a cost of over 9 million dollars, but includes improvements to distribution infrastructure, such as hydrants, pumps, water mains, buildings, etc. My basic argument was that an equal or greater amount of water can be found in the Dusty Road aquifer at a much lower cost. The SCRD's own reports state that the Dusty Road aquifer is much more prolific than the great Church Road wells. (no sarcasm intended). This source is very close to the water treatment plant but would probably be pure enough to be treated right at the wellhead, as is the case in Gibsons. That is the simple explanation, but it gets more complicated as you get into the details. The Dusty Road aquifer was dropped from consideration as a water source by the SCRD, based upon what I feel were poor and unjustified recommendations by their consulting firm. But since none of the Board members wanted to discuss this option at any length, the SCRD went with the 8 to 9 million dollar Church Road option. Maybe they can get some grant money to cover some of the cost so it doesn't hit the taxpayers too hard. If the Environmental Flow requirements of 200 litres per second flow into Chapman Creek can be modified somewhat, as per a local engineer's suggestion, then the problem is solved. We are not short of water in Sechelt and never were. It just has to be discovered in the aquifers under our feet and done so at a reasonable cost. Jim Fyfe of Fyfe Drilling could have been a great help in this but the SCRD chose to ignore his expert opinions based upon three generations of experience on Jim's part. So, there it is. We will have water, but at what cost to the taxpayers?

It also goes without saying, that I think that spending a further 7 million dollars for water meters in Sechelt is a poor use of funds and will not produce one more gallon of water. It cannot be justified on the basis of leak detection as the Sechelt Chamber of Commerce has demonstrated that this can be done for a small fraction of the cost of water meters. Justification of meters on the basis of stopping abuse of water restrictions also is not a strong argument as proven by research by North Vancouver. The fairness in billing aspect of water meters, based on actual water use, is the only reasonable justification for meters. Is that worth 7 million dollars? All of this has not even mentioned the spending of money on the foolish prospect of a 53 million dollar (and climbing) estimate for a raw water reservoir. As I said previously, it gets complicated when you get into the details.

Progress on Traffic / Parking safety in front of Sechelt Elementary School

Martyn Wilson, WSCA Former Chair & Member

As most members of WSCA are aware, our priority request for District of Sechelt (DOS) capital funding and action for some years has been the unsafe nature of parking on DOS property in front of West Sechelt Elementary School. Vehicles in the parking lot are forced to back into one of West Sechelt's main roads, sometimes crossing a lane, causing a chaotic and unsafe situation for the drivers themselves, children, and passing traffic - particularly at the end of the school day. The DOS did take some action by angling the parking thereby encouraging backing into only one lane but this was only a stop gap action. This situation was also the indirect responsibility of the school district as there currently is very limited parking on school grounds - not enough for staff, let alone visitors.

We finally have good news to report: The provincial Ministry of Education has approved the funds necessary for the school district to redesign the school and the grounds. Part of the plan is the creation of a proper parking lot at the rear of the school. When this new parking lot is completed, the District of Sechelt currently is planning to change the design of the parking on its property so that vehicles will park parallel to the road. This design is the one that WSCA has been promoting and duplicates the parking on the road at the side of the school. It is possible that, with the funding issues created by the current CoVid-19 pandemic action will be delayed but at least now there is a plan in place to deal with this safety problem.

Wakefield/West Sechelt A06 Sewer Collection and Service Connections Update

Cathy Kiss, WSCA Director

According to the District of Sechelt website, the Wakefield/West Sechelt Area A06 Sewer project was completed with the Sewer Line Commissioning date set as August 12, 2019. All homeowners in the area received written notice that we have 2 years from the date of commissioning, until August 12, 2021 to submit an application to be connected to the City Sewer line service and decommission any septic systems. Residents who connect to the City Sewer line **prior** to the deadline of August 2021 will not have to pay the \$1500 service connection fee or the \$50 inspection fee for a new line. All area residents continue to pay the annual Sewer Parcel Tax-Bylaw 559-identified on the annual Property Tax notice (approx. \$274 in 2019). Those whose applications for Sewer Service connections are accepted and connected to the Sewer will pay a Sewer user fee. (\$371 in 2019) Those not yet connected to the sewer prior to August 2021, will not incur a Sewer user fee until the deadline. After August 2021, **All** area residents will pay an annual Sewer User fee, whether they are connected to the sewer line or not.

A number of residences in West Sechelt have connected to the sewer over the past year, whereas others have not. The WSCA Board has written to the DOS asking some questions related to the Sewer Connections and Service, such as “How many residences have connected for service to the sewer line? Are there any outstanding issues with respect to remuneration or reparation for post sewer property damage?” We will post an update once we receive a response from the DOS. Any residents of Area A06 who wish to give feedback about their experiences or issues with Sewer Line commissioning can also send an email to the WSCA Board at contactWSCA@gmail.com.

Wakefield Lift Station Update (May 2020)

Cathy Kiss, WSCA Director

The Wakefield Lift Station at the intersections of Wakefield Road and Sunshine Coast Highway in West Sechelt, incurred an equipment failure and effluent spill on March 18, 2020. According to the District of Sechelt News Release “**It is estimated that 5,300 litres of effluent may have spilled into the ocean.**” The Sunshine Coast Regional District (SCRD) notified the District of

Sechelt (DOS) immediately. Staff attended to the area immediately and contained the spill. Details of the issue are contained in the news release from the DOS and in the Local: <https://www.sechelt.ca/Portals/0/public%20document%20library/Public%20Notices/News%20release%20wakefield%20lift%20station%20failure.pdf>
<https://www.thelocalweekly.ca/wakefield-road-sewage-spill/>

The final paragraph of the DOS News Release states, “The District budgeted replacement for this lift station in the 2019 and 2020 budgets and applied for 2 different grants. In 2019 a grant application was submitted under the Green Infrastructure Funding for Small Communities and in 2020 the District applied for a grant under the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program. The results of these applications are not known yet. In addition to the grants the District has included \$870,750 to replace the lift station in the 2020 draft budget with District funding so the replacement will not be grant reliant.”

The WSCA Board has written a letter to DOS staff to ask for more specific information about the budget breakdown, timelines for the start and completion, construction of the replacement lift station. E.g. What budget lines will cover the full replacement cost of the lift station if no grant money is secured? Has the District committed to construction of the new replacement Lift Station in 2020? What is the status of the Bidding and Tender process? The WSCA will provide an update once we receive a response from the DOS.



Why garden during a coronavirus lockdown?

Sharon O'Brien, WSCA Vice Chair

Rain! Rain! Beautiful Rain! Who would have thought that on the “Wet Coast” we would celebrate a day or so of rain. If you’re a gardener, you’d be the first raise your hand. And after a stretch of very warm weather, it’s a day of rest both for the garden and particularly for aging bodies.

With the gyms closed, the playing fields closed and even some of the walking/hiking trails closed. a couple of hours in the garden will give you all the exercise you would usually get doing other organized activities - walking, bending, stretching, lifting. And it get your heart beat up as well.

You don’t have to have a big space. A good sunny windowsill will do. If you don’t have room for a garden box (or two), larger pots work just as well. Buy good potting soil and some seeds or seedlings, fertilizer, water regularly and enjoy your hard work. It’s a very grounding, no pun intended, activity to dig in the dirt. Many describe it as meditative. Plus, I think we all have a few farmer genes in us.

The staff at our local garden centres are an endless source of knowledge and information. All the centres are open now, and while still practicing distancing, are able to provide everything you might need. They are an encyclopedia of information, just ask. And be patient and respectful of those other gardeners who also are waiting in line, like yourself, to marvel at the flowers and vegetables in the greenhouses with a list in hand but leaving with twice as much as they went in for.



So get out there and plant some lettuce and peas and radishes and flowers. Be thankful you are well and live where you have room to garden, even if it's only a tiny one. Teach your children or grandchildren where their food comes from. Listen to the birds, visit over the fence with your neighbours and enjoy the quiet, for now. We'll soon be back to our hectic, noisy lives. Just don't forget your garden.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatoon/indoor-gardening-pandemic-1.5535216>

<https://garden.org/covid19/>

Walk for Wellness around West Sechelt

Al Jenkins, WSCA Director

Walk for fitness and explore all the sights and opportunities our neighborhood offers. Whether you want to keep fit, just explore, walk the dog, or take the kids out, have a closer look at what may work. With a little planning, you should be able to create many different walks to suit available time and weather. And over time you should be able to extend the walk to take you out to some more interesting and natural places.

Preparation is important to keep you well and first comes your feet. Find comfortable sturdy shoes. And maybe walking poles and a sunhat. Dress for the weather and bring water and a snack. I usually check the weather radar before heading out to see if a soaker maybe looming.

Your walk may take you on sidewalks, gravel streets, and muddy trails. You will find what you like and what works best. Each neighborhood provides special places. Several examples are listed to help you get started. One hike that is becoming increasingly popular is the biking/hiking trail system off the end of Gowland/Reeves Road. Access to the Big Tree Forest is possible from here and is a welcome relief in warm weather. Once summer sets in early walks are more enjoyable.

Another easier walk is down Mason to the beach and enjoy a swim in the ocean. A walk back up Wakefield Road provides a good cardio workout. Use caution crossing the highway and along road edges. Other walks up through Tyler Heights to link to the corridor trail/Heritage Road and loop back through Kinnickinick Park is another good choice if you have enough time.

Once you become conditioned, you may want to explore more remote trails. If you go there, extra preparation is necessary to keep safe. Load up a trail map such as the Trail Forks or Sunshine Coast TrailMapps.com app on your phone and learn how to use it. Carry a compass and a map. And most importantly bring a hiking partner and let someone know your plan and include when you will return. If you venture into wild lands, carry a bear spray and make noise. You never know what you will find.



This pandemic has created new opportunities. There are plenty of places to go so plan your route to provide new interesting destinations. With a little thought you will soon learn to include loops that will give you a more varied experience. A new cellular transmitter is being installed on the CBC tower and will offer better GPS coverage.

Enjoy and stay safe

Neighbourhood Connect

Kareen McCaughan, WSCA Chair

During this unusual time many folks are thinking about how they can support their community and in particular about reaching out to assist isolated individuals to help them maintain physical and psychological well-being. Multiple Sunshine Coast organizations have developed new programs and/or expanded existing programs. Links to a wide range of support services can be found at the Sunshine Coast Community Task Force, www.scctaskforce.com. Residents reaching out to their neighbours supports our community and minimizes the chances of that no one will feel isolated especially during the current socializing restrictions. Together we can ensure that our neighbourhoods are healthy and connected. There are multiple innovative ways to connect while respecting current physical distancing health protocols. Besides checking if an isolated neighbour could do with some help with food or medication delivery one novel project that has been created to support psychological well-being is a letter writing initiative.

Letter Writing -The Sunshine Coast Community Support Services, The Better at Home program has started a letter writing project, Dear Coastal Neighbour that enables members of the community to write letters to individuals who may feel isolated.

<https://www.sccss.ca/programs/community-action-engagement/dear-coastal-neighbour>

WSCA Board Volunteer - Another option is to join the WSCA board. Helping your local community association is a great way to interact, contribute, and collaborate with others who care about West Sechelt. We would really appreciate your help. Please contact

contactwsca@gmail.com

WSCA Yard Sale Cancellation

The annual WSCA yard sale has been cancelled this year due to the CoVid-19 pandemic.

West Sechelt Elementary Student and Family Appreciation Parade

West Sechelt residents got a treat as they enjoyed watching the West Sechelt Elementary Student and Family Appreciation Parade on May 1st. The staff held the parade to show their appreciation and support to students, families and frontline workers as they drove their decorated cars around the West Sechelt community.



“Be kind, be calm and be safe” – Dr. Bonnie Henry

WSCA members are welcome to submit contributions for future newsletters.
Opinions expressed are those of individual members and not necessarily the whole association.
