

Tofino Ratepayers Association



Feb. 5, 2020

Re: Summary of Visit with Tofino's Chief Financial Officer

Dear Members

Yesterday, Tuesday Feb 4, I had a meeting with Nyla Attiana, Tofino's Chief Financial Officer.

The first thing I asked about was whether all written comments from the original Open House made their way to councillors. It had appeared at the tax meeting of last Friday that staff may have "summarized" people's comments and submitted a shortened report. She assured me that, while staff tried to organize responses into logical groupings, all comments were directly conveyed to council.

Then, I asked about what I really came to discuss. The idea of paying for the Sewage Treatment Plant construction loan with utility fees based on use as opposed to taxes based on assessed values. This might mitigate some of the projected large tax increases for many users and tend to place the burden on those who produce more sewage rather than those who use the system to a lesser degree.

She was already investigating and working on some scenarios that could do just that. It is her opinion that a hybrid solution of both tax and user fees might be most effective. Mind you, Council will have to eventually approve any proposals, but she will be developing and presenting them.

So, this is good news. The possibility of something to make a difference.

I am also happy to report that several other ideas and concepts that raise money for the DOT, but not property taxes, are under examination by district staff. These alternatives are much in alignment with proposals and ideas that we as an organization have been looking at and promoting. In fact, the use of MRDT funds is under consideration, the use of a pay parking scheme to raise money for the District, and Nyla supports the development of a local sales tax to raise money. These initiatives to generate moneys for local government could offset the need for increased property tax. She is working at the provincial level on the matter of the sales tax.

None of these options are fully developed or have been adequately explored yet, but I take encouragement from our conversation that they are all being supported by Tofino's Chief Financial Officer as worthy of examination and development.

I could go into greater detail on these things, but the main takeaway is that the Tofino RPA can play a role in fostering these ideas in the community and getting the public more informed and educated on the possibilities. The public needs and has a right, to participate in these policy decisions. We don't want things presented as a done deal after a closed process. We also need to make sure that if such moneys are realized that they are applied to core services like infrastructure, water sewer etc.

Her last words were to the effect that the Tofino RPA needs to stay involved. I believe she is serious.

Don't hesitate to contact me with your thoughts and ideas.

Jack Gillie