

Tofino Ratepayers Association



Public Hearing on Housing Proposal

June 14, 2023

Hello Ratepayers.

I thought I would just report on the public hearing Tofino council just held on the residential development proposal for the land beside the Gas and Go and behind the Co-op gas bar. Here is the link for the public notice. [Notice of Public Hearing - District of Tofino](#). Thanks to those who wrote or attended. In my opinion, this was one of the most significant council events in many years. As I will try to explain

The hearing itself was attended by about 15 to 20 people. There seemed 3 major issues addressed.

Many of the comments concerned storm water runoff from the area of the proposal that causes seasonal flooding to the down hill, east side of the highway. I recall a notorious low spot in front of the Co-op Gas Bar, (if I got that right?) a serious problem for those who live there. Most speakers addressing this problem indicated they were not against the development but wanted this runoff issue sorted out. It would seem the development creates an opportunity to address that. That's my opinion.

Second most frequently addressed issue was the need for housing, both rental and ownership options. It was pointed out that the proposal would offer so-called single-family homes with a small rental suite attached to each unit as well. The suite to be long term rental only....no Vacation Rental. There was also a larger multifamily building. A variety of speakers addressed the need for this type of housing and the problems the community was facing because of a lack of housing. Some spoke to the issue of unfilled positions at the Hospital, schoolteachers leaving etc. because of a lack of housing opportunities.

Several speakers also posed the question of municipal water supplies and whether Tofino could supply the necessary water. And that was it.

I can't remember anyone at the public hearing actually saying the proposal was bad idea. A couple of people who wrote in a response were opposed citing infrastructure and water limitations.

So now the council will decide. They must move and vote on third reading. And eventually fourth reading to pass the bylaw.

So why all the fuss?.... Why is this so important? It has been more than 15 years since Tofino has rezoned any significant acreage for these purposes (apart from the "Affordable Housing Project" towards Tonquin) which was much more controversial. Many of our housing woesthe availability and price of housing and to some extent our tax woes, stem from the lack of such approvals over this period of time.

The decision to slow walk residential development because of water concerns occurred that long ago. In that time the amount of tourist visitation would have more than doubled. Using far more water than any amount used by the local citizens. I would suggest that if we continue to face such thin supplies of water, there be an effort to temporarily limit tourism growth rather than housing, until that supply of water has been addressed.ie increased. At this stage housing the people of Tofino should be the higher priority and the greater need.

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Prague is us Here is a link.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/feb/01/overwhelmed-prague-tries-to-limit-airbnb-to-curb-tourism>

There are a lot of places around the world which have a similar story to our own small village. Although Prague is a large metropolitan area, it is just one example. Here is an interesting article on their problems and what they are trying to do. Is there anything to be learned from their experience?

In our next newsletter we will be off to Maui, Hawaii. I hope to provide an analysis of what the people of Maui did to address the high cost of housing and the destruction of their communities. Can we learn anything from this example? We will find out.

For the Tofino Ratepayers Association

Jack Gillie