

Tofino Ratepayers Association



Nov. 28, 2019

Re: Summary of Council Meeting

Hello members.

I wanted to send out a little news report about what happened at the Council meeting on Tuesday. The taxpayers were well represented. I didn't do a count, but we filled the room and all chairs were brought into use, a few spilled out into the doorway and into the hall. I believe there were some thirty or more of us. Thanks to all who could attend and showed up on such short notice. This all occurred in great haste after a last-minute opportunity to speak to the bus bylaw presented itself. In any event, I believe our showing was a positive sign of things to come.

Because of a late amendment to the agenda (thanks to councillor McMaster) five citizens were allowed to address council for 2 minutes apiece. Jack Gillie, Shelley Renard, Cathy Thicke, Arlene McGinnis and Carol Gagne. I can say the speakers were composed, on point and represented well the concerns of the citizens and your Rate Payers Association in regard to the latest tax initiative. ie. the Transit Bylaw.

After this round of activity, council went into their adopted agenda and most people left, as there was no further opportunity to speak to the issue.

When the meeting progressed to the point of addressing the added amendment, Councillor McMaster spoke to the correspondence received from a Tofino resident and spoke to the issue of "tax fatigue". He said council needs to realize Tofino may be approaching a "breaking point" in regard to taxation. In regard to the transit issue itself he felt it best to let it go or postpone this matter till people had had a chance to digest the current bout of taxation increases. I recall him saying "you can't always have everything you want" and now would be a good time to slow down. He also put forward the idea that as more residence get pressured, more will resort to turning their long-term rental into a VCR to pay off the tax bill. Councillor Chalmers felt the bus proposal fit into councils identified strategic objectives, citing the benefits in regard to climate change and some other objectives which I could not hear. Councillor Law spoke in favour of the bus and sighted an example of how an elderly person at Chesterman's Beach was being supported in her house by friends and neighbours and had to be "rescued" and that the bus would impact positively on such a situation.

I will not characterize my response to this very brief set of comments. The Mayor, Councillor Stere and councillor McQuade said nothing. After a very brief pause the Mayor said, well I guess we will see what happens Friday. I believe referring to the final day for "oppose" forms to be received by the Regional District.

Later I emailed councillor McMaster to thank him for bringing the issue to the fore and expressed our disappointment for the lack of support on council. He responded by saying they "don't get it". Referring to council.

Those of you who I have talked to have expressed a significant disappointment that so little was discussed by our council and I agree.

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However, I must point out the positives. We may have lost this battle with council, who knows, we will see what happens on Friday. I will say we are winning the battle with the public. We are currently at 150 members, and growing, so cheers for us. I was talking to someone today who was impressed with that number. They said you are probably the biggest organization of that sort in Tofino, I added after the COOP and the CIBC. So thank you all for all your work and support, in increasing our numbers. And I like the way the memberships are coming in. Most are being generated by word of mouth, friend to friend, neighbour to neighbour and family to family. It reminds me that there is something here worth fighting for.

Another positive is the way our members in particular, and the public in general, have increased their “literacy” and awareness in regard to what are sometimes very complicated issues about taxation. These issues have been coming to the fore for only a few months now. And these issues would have never seen the light of day last year at this time. I am so proud of the members’ efforts. It is clear the membership is engaged and ready to work, and this energy is coming from all of you who want a future in this community. I have no doubt the pendulum will begin to swing in our favour as time moves along.

There are some new ideas for initiatives that are simmering that we can all discuss in a few weeks. I hope as many of you as possible will be able to get your energy back. So, Thanks to all.

I will try and send something out in a couple of days about what we might try to achieve at the “open House” on taxation. Tuesday Dec 3 at the Community Hall.

Cheers Jack Gillie