

**Mayne Island Improvement District  
Town Hall Meeting  
Date: Saturday, May 14, 2011  
Location: Mayne Island Agricultural Hall**

**CALL TO ORDER:**

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 PM by Chair, Trustee David Maude

**PRESENT:**

Trustees: Tracey DeRousie, David Maude; Bob McKinnon

Staff: Recording Secretary: Gerrie Wise, Fire Chief Jeff Francis

**ABSENT with Notice:** Trustee Dean MacKay; Trustee Gary Akey,

**Approx 30 MEMBERS OF PUBLIC**

The Chair welcomed everyone and explained the focus for today is 3 primary issues:

- 1) Health Centre Taxes
- 2) Your Input to Garbage Service Under our letters patent we must provide garbage service. Some people may have ideas on how the service can be improved.
- 3) Replacement of fire hall as to process, procedure and time line - We need some discussion since some people want to wait and some want to go ahead.

1) Health Centre Budget/Taxes:

Last year total budgeted was approx \$89,000. In September, 2010 the Board approved \$137,000 for the budget which was submitted to the Ministry. The Chair consulted with the Ministry with regard to raising the minimum taxation on each parcel of real property and the inclusion of the allocation for unpaid taxes of approx \$32,000. The Ministry advised that allocation should not have been included in the 2011 budget. The present Board, after that consultation with the Ministry, reduced the budget to approximately \$105,000.

With regard to the minimum billing, the minimum billing for each property was originally set at \$5. However, as this did not cover the expense of tax preparation and billing, the minimum was raised to \$10. After consultation with the Ministry and discussion at the Board level, the Board has determined to seek a minimum billing of \$30.

Although this still represents an increase, Trustee Maude assured the gathering that for 2012, in July and August, the Board will be looking at the budget with a view to reductions wherever possible.

**Q. Jeanine Dodds:** Which Ministry did you contact and what do they have to do with our budget.

**Ans. Chair** That is the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Community Development. All Bylaws go to them for approval. All budgets are approved by the Ministry. In the fall we sent it to the Ministry and they approved it. Then, in the spring I had some concerns and contacted them and they came back and said no, you can't include the \$32,000 and you have to remove it.

**Q. Kathie Warning** Please explain the amount reduced, the \$32,000.

**Ans. Chair** Last year, in order to recover the operating funds for unpaid taxes the Board added the amount to the Budget. However, Tax Sales are the only method available to the District to recover the unpaid taxes, so that figure had to be removed from the 2011 budget.

**Q Jeanine Dodds** So in fact we would be paying the unpaid taxes for those who are not paying.

**Ans. Chair** Yes, that is correct, but it has now been removed from the budget and won't be reflected in the tax. It is an awkward thing because first they approved it, then they asked that it be removed.

**Trustee DeRousie** please explain to the community why the budget will be \$17,000 higher, this year.

**Ans. Chair** The budget process showed increases everywhere, particularly in the collection process since many taxes were unpaid. These fees included Staff time, legal costs, extra postage, etc. for collecting unpaid bills which accounts for \$6000 right there. If you go through it line by line there are increases in all the expenses.

**Q. Mary Cooper** when you bill back those people who are not paying their taxes you should be collecting 100% of the costs so that it does not cost us, the other taxpayers, money. Everything connected to the collection should be recorded and recovered from those taxpayers, even the staff costs and right down to the registered mail costs. If we have a year like this last one with costs over \$10,000 it must be pursued

**Ans. Chair** I do agree but the previous Board elected to waive those costs in order to smooth the process.

**Q. Mary** That was because the community did not understand and created "flak", but once you explain and make it clear that you are paying for those who are not, people will support the charges.

**Ans. Chair** Yes, people need to understand: If you don't pay your taxes it costs the rest of us money. If we have to go to Tax Sale process, the costs are upwards of \$1000 per property.

**Q Ian Dow** With rising costs, is the Board reviewing the revenues from the Health Centre? We need to review the revenue.

**Ans. Chair:** The MIID owns the building, as a landlord we do not operate it.

**Q. Jeanine Dodds** It has always been my understanding that VIHA pays staff, etc. because we provide the building. Is this correct?

**Ans. Chair:** Yes, that is correct. VIHA does provide approx \$400,000 to \$500,000 in services to this island. There are rural communities in BC that can't attract a doctor at all. You must remember that the Health Center is operated by the MIHC Association. It is not the mandate of the Improvement District to operate the services.

**Q. Carol Munro** I understood there are other rents paid to the Health Centre Assoc.

**Ans. Chair** Yes, Under the present agreement, VIHA pays a small rent to the Improvement District and the other Tenants pay a small rent to the MI Health Centre Assoc.

**Q. Len Epp** What is the estimate of the cost of the billing itself?

**Ans.** This year \$12,000

**Q** Out of \$105,000

**Ans. Chair** Yes. An Explanation of billing and collection costs and the time required by the Administrator was given. There are approximately 30 to 50 properties who consistently won't pay, and that costs our time and our money of approx \$1000 per

property. And every one of us is paying for those persons who don't pay. Perhaps the word could get out that those who refuse to pay are costing the rest of you money.

**Q. Kathie Warning** Please put something in the Mayneliner to explain that and possibly the community would be more supportive.

**Ans. Chair** Yes. We will in the June Mayneliner and we need to get the message out to everyone who is not here today.

**Q. Jeannine Dodds** Some education is needed. We have a Health Clinic supported by Taxes because that was what we chose, which is that we would provide the building and VIHA would provide the services. We need to get the message out regarding VIHA's contribution and our annual taxes. We receive over \$400,000 services and It costs you approx \$33/per year.

**Ans. Chair** Yes we are fortunate to be able to provide funding by taxes in comparison to Galiano Island and Pender Island whose health clinics are run by a Non-profit Society who are totally dependent on fund raising and donations. He gave a brief explanation of Improvement District and the Capital Region District.

**Q Jeff Francis** Put the explanation in with the Tax Notice as well as the Mayneliner.

**Ans. Chair** Good Suggestion we should do that as a one-page notice.

**Q. Mary Cooper** They still may not read it. It is costing us more than you have said due to having to borrow from Operating funds to subsidize the costs. It is important that the community realize this.

**Ans. Chair** Yes. We cannot afford to have the costs run on and on. The other thing I should touch on is that the idea of a Parcel Tax which was recommended by the Ministry. This would cost each property approx \$65. The Board is looking at having a discussion with the community regarding changing the Tax Model. We need to see if we can get costs down to maybe \$50 per property – would that be acceptable?

**Q. Mary Cooper** I presume you are speaking to Joshua at the Ministry, if so get it in writing please as the Ministry has changed their advice before. Regarding a parcel Tax, the Ministry cannot rule which way the ID collects the taxes, they can only recommend. With a parcel tax seniors can't qualify for a tax deferral.

**Ans. Chair** Unfortunately, The Improvement District Health Centre Taxes can't be deferred whether they are assessment or parcel based.

**Trustee DeRousie offered** an explanation of the Tax Deferral available to some Seniors and others: If the taxes are collected by the Finance minister they may be eligible for deferral. Taxes collected by the Improvement District taxes are not eligible for deferral. An explanation regarding taxes for the fire hall was given

**Q. Ian Dow:** Is a parcel tax a flat tax across the board, the same amount for all? That is how it should be because it is the same service for all. The same for the fire hall. Is it cheaper for the ID to do the billing for a parcel tax. So we can start saving a little bit here.

**Ans. Chair** Yes, the billing would involve less work, but not the collection. That is where the costs are.

**Q Ian Dow** Can you skip the billing. If we just wrote a cheque every June 1<sup>st</sup>, Could you not mail a notice and save the funding.

**Ans. Chair** Possibly, but I think we would only be saving \$1. Per property

**Trustee DeRousie** Don't forget, you would still have to have proper bookkeeping and the related costs.

**Q Carol Munro** If you paid early like some of the Water Districts used to, does that make a difference?

**Ans Mary Cooper** –answered with Water District experience whereby discounts were offered for early payment, but this was discontinued on Ministry advice. We still had people who did not pay. Remember that discounts cost you money and it is important to collect penalties. The Ministry advises that you cannot offer both discounts and penalties. Water Districts can just turn off water – that gets the taxes paid.

**Ans. Chair** gave an explanation regarding the penalties allowable to the Improvement District which are strictly regulated. Last year the Board wanted to have penalties set higher and discussed \$300 to \$1000 penalties. This spring the Ministry advised the maximum penalties may be only 15% so that is what it will be raised to. However that is not a lot of money. So we will do the Mayneliner and a mail-out that is what I am hearing here today. If we can save these costs. Although we can't tell you who the non-payers are please bring peer pressure to bear when you can.

**Garbage:**

The MIID must provide garbage collection service under our Letters Patent. In the past we have always contracted out. In the last year our contractor is losing business to the point where he is not comfortable. We are trying to assist him to find ways to improve his business. For example a drop-off service at Home Hardware.

Is Monday the best day for pick-up?

Any other suggestions for service or other things?

**Q. Mary Cooper** Can our Trustee address the present situation

**Island Trustee Jeanine Dodds** She cannot comment re: present TUP and zoning issue. However she did explain about having a Transfer Station and suggested long term planning establishing Zoning, etc. is due. MIID should write a letter to request this from the Island Trust.

**Q. Ian Dow** If it is the legal responsibility of MIID does that mean the District will have to subsidize the garbage pick-up. Maybe people should think about that when they are dropping off their garbage because it's cheaper, when they may be paying taxes for the service.

**Ans. Chair** Yes. If we can't find a contractor and our present contractor quits, we will have to hire someone to collect garbage which will be funded from taxes.

**Q. Mary.** The TUP is coming up and I understand that the competitor will not be able to continue because Bylaw enforcement should close it down and the pick up business will improve.

**Ans. Chair** There are several appeals available to the competition. The process can take up to about two years.

**Ans. Jeanine Dodds:** explanation of the process of TUP and Zoning and the costs to the taxpayer (us) and emphasized that the competition will not go away. He is apparently applying for re-zoning.

**Q. Jon Hoff** With the service that Jeff provides it may be money driven, but the main customers are week-enders who need a Sunday pick or a drop-off. The permanent residents don't have a problem with Mondays but a Sunday pick or drop-off would better suit the week-enders. Obviously there is a need for improved service.

**Q. \_\_\_\_\_** Could he park at the Library like he did last week-end.

**Ans. Chair** Yes, he is also considering parking at the Home Hardware

**Q. Carol** If it's \$5 for drop off and \$7.50 for pick-up, won't residents be dropping off their garbage?

**Ans. Chair** That is one of the questions and calculations the contractor must make. Obviously there is a cost to the Contractor for pick up and residents would have to pay more for that service.

**Q Ian Dow** If he goes out to pick up it must be frustrating for him if there are few bags to pick up and he must go on the full route regardless.

**Ans. Chair** Yes, that is part of his cost and the frustration.

**Q. Barry Wilks:** I studied the petition at garage and I believe that the service is used by local persons too. And certainly saw a lot of local residents on the petition. This guy is providing a service which obviously is needed at \$4.50 a bag. I don't know if he is subsidizing the costs. With regard to the complainers – I don't think it's valid that there are rats accumulating and odours. When I go to the back to get diesel, I don't notice any odour . This is free enterprise in action.

**Ans. Chair** The thing is that Improvement District must provide a service. It becomes our problem if the contractor quits because of the competition. We would like to assist the contractor to make a success of the service. With regard to subsidizing the service; on Galiano, the drop-off service charge is \$7/bag. In Sidney the fee is \$4.75 but that operator doesn't have to factor in the Ferry costs. As Trustee Jeanine Dodd explained, \$7 is approximately the going rate and our Contractor is charging a market rate and needs to make a profit in order to stay in business. I think the competition rate does seem well below the market. We can't do anything about the competition but we need to make our contractor's service better so it is profitable.

**Q. Ian Dow** Barry's right to bring up the Contrary point. Jeff's service is needed by weekenders, but because it's a little cheaper, are taxpayers of this island going to support Jeff's garbage disposal at the cost of more in taxes if our current Contractor can't continue and packs it in? It is a false economy.

**Ans. Chair** That's why I wanted to put this on the community's radar. The Improvement District needs to make an explanation to taxpayers of the actual costs of garbage pickup if a subsidy is required .It may cost each parcel approx \$7.50 a year.

**Q. Jeanine Dodds.** Remember the Zoning issue – The District needs to write a letter!

**Ans. Chair** explained how a Transfer Station is defined and the need for re-zoning if one is required.

**Q. Kathie Warning** Explain the situation to the community then maybe people will stop using the competitor.

**Ans. Chair** We need to watch that we do not impair the individuals right to do business. We need to make our Contractors business more profitable so that he can stay in business. Any further questions?

**Q. Dan Stanton** If our contractor has to quit do you think Jeff would stay at \$4.50 (laughter)

**Ans. Chair** Honestly, based on the other competition prices. I would say no.

**Q. Mary Cooper** I can't believe this -It is not going to happen – how can he collect and store garbage in the Centre of town.

**Ans. Chair** If citizens have concerns about that please speak to Colin Shew, your Trustee.

### ***Firehall replacement***

Chair explained Trustees want direction from the community as to how to proceed and when. We already have concepts and ideas

There are two distinct parts to this question.

Leave it a year to cool off , vs Do something immediately

Personally I would like to get it done right away right now. If this was a private corporation it would be started now. But we are not a private corporation; it is a local government we must go to referendum. The community must approve it. So we need to talk about what's needed and when the community wants it. Is this important, what do you want to do?

**Q. Ian Dow:** It is important to separate the facts from the nonsense that's gone around about the firehall. I'm not an expert in firehalls, but I have put up a lot of large buildings in mining operations. A lot of the things that have gone around about the previous proposal I don't feel were suitable or accurate. I was told that the firehall was condemned, then I found out that is a fallacy. There is nothing wrong with the firehall, aside from a few minor renovations. I know that for a fact – I was told that subsequently. If the firehall is not condemned, if it is in good shape, why should we replace it at a cost of \$3.5 million- we should repair it.

Secondly The main issue is that there was no choice given only a plan and a request that it be approved. Suggested getting requests for proposals before the referendum and putting them out to the public..

**Ans. Chair.** Currently the fire hall is legally occupied, non condemned building it is insured. However physically speaking, the building does not have sufficient space. If we brought it up to seismic standards it still wouldn't be large enough. Discussed a suggestion in Don Slinn's letter – Do what North Saanich did and build a vehicle building next door and then renovate their existing hall for offices and other space.

**Trustee Tracey DeRousie:** That was their plan, but they have not started work, yet.

**Chair** explained that they have let out the Contract. Once the referendum was passed they had to get plans finalized and now have let the contact out. That process took 6 to 8 months. Personally I think we should do it this way. We have to determine the steps to take. I have been working with Fire Dept to establish something.

Hoping to avoid the Consultation process.and use the RFP process to get the costs from suppliers before we proceed.

**Q. Sid Mister** Are you insinuating that the Fire Dept will dictate what will be built

**Ans. Chair** No, We are building a building from scratch and it needs to meet the needs of the Fire Department. I want to engage the end user at the beginning of the process.

**Q. Sid Mister** Wouldn't it be prudent to look at other firehalls that have recently been built? The Firehall south of Nanaimo as example.

**Ans. Chair** Yes, That will be all part of the process for the Trustees.

**Q. Sid Mister** gave examples of new fire halls

**Q. Jeanine Dodds** – Is it possible to get copies of the latest 10 halls for the public to see before we proceed to referendum. We need to have some more information. before a referendum.

**Q Ian Dow** If we have RFPs we can show the public what is required.

How are discussions going with the Fire Dept?.

**Ans. Chair** We are literally just starting. We have had some preliminary discussion only. As far as timing goes, we only formed our fire hall replacement committee yesterday. I believe that as a community, most people believe we do need a new firehall. Not why we need to replace the hall, But how much ?

**Q. Jon Hoff** I think our priority is 1<sup>st</sup> we need to provide a safe community for staff and firefighters – then provide storage for vehicles and equipment. What can be done to the existing building? What more space do we need?

**Ans. Chair** To bring the existing building to standards we would not be able to have any vehicles in it. We should consider re-purposing the building and building, and next door a vehicle storage unit.

**Q. Sid Mister** I have a friend in the Fire Service in Vancouver. He said a drive through costs too much to heat.

**Ans. Chair** Frankly a drive-through does have issues with heat retention, but the actual costs for the seismic considerations is higher than the heating considerations because you have doors on either end rather than walls. Specifications like drive-throughs will evolve through the process.

Right now the committee is only me. As we need more skills we will bring more people on board. We have to involve people at the right time. Right now it is the Fire Department. We need to start with a foundation.

**Q. Kathie Warning** Please explain if the outside audit that is proposed will be able to identify the needs.

**Ans. Chair** Explained that there is a proposal to bring in an outside auditor to review the Fire Service Operations, Equipment, the whole thing on Mayne. They would not be looking at the building replacement in much detail.

**Jeff Francis:** In 1994 report the Office of the Fire Commissioner inspected and made recommendations at that time. He then gave an explanation of Fire Services and needs of the Fire Services. We have different requirements from Galiano or Saturna.

I have looked at 80 firehalls from here to Alberta to find the most efficient methods and designs, and pared down requests to what is needed – not what is wanted – but needed..

**Chair** Being on an island presents certain problems Eg: no back-up- it may be hours or even days away, so more equipment necessary. Compared with say Nanaimo.

**Jeff Francis** An example is other communities have hydrants and don't need tankers.

**Chair** We must have an individual answer for our community that's why it is important to have the Fire Department at the start. We have to Move forward.

**Carol Munro** What is the Cost of outside audit

**Ans. Chair** \$6000

**Q. Carol Munro** I think you should not be concerned about moving too quickly for the firehall, I was expecting the new Board to be working on governance and that sort of thing. However I must caution you about being a one-person committee. Get the people who said they had a better idea to join the committee.

**Ans. Chair** We need to start off with one person and one idea so as not to get bogged down with too many people at the beginning. The Chair gave a description of the Board committees. In Six months from now the fire hall committee could be 20 people.

**Q. Ian Dow** Are you starting the process right after this meeting?

**Ans. Chair** I already have had some conversations.

**Q. Ian Dow** I think we need to define Safe in reference to the building. To bring the building up to seismic requirements is not to make the building safe so that firefighters who don't live in the building anyway aren't killed when the building falls down, it is to make sure the trucks are safe and accessible. That's the purpose.

**Ans. Chair** One of the awkward parts is defining what we currently have. Why are we replacing a legally occupied building. One is that it does not meet seismic standards, If

we have a moderate earthquake we will have problems with that building. In reality, our firehall doesn't work. The physical layout is too small. In context do we need to proceed today? Yes – we have 3 vehicles sitting out in the weather. I think we do need a new hall – the questions is how much will it cost.

**Q. Ian Dow** have you measured the property would another building fit.

**Ans. Chair.** Those options exist. The current property is large enough, but other property may be purchased. First we need to get a floor plan; does it fit; do we have room on the property, do we purchase property and so on. We have to take each step in it's place. We need to move forward.

**Q. Carol** If we are going back to square one, are you going to ask do we really need all that equipment? Now we have to build new building for the new equipment.

**Ans. Chair** That is one thing the audit will look at it. But we have to determine what we want. We have to address the concept: Do we want Superior Shuttle service – that was a goal in the past. I think that is an admirable goal. Having more fire fighting equipment. What are our ultimate needs. We have to look 20 or 30 years down the road.

**Q. Barry Wilks** In the past there has been a lot of work put into this . The community does know what space is necessary. I think you must do some exploration into the costs before recommending a building. I think the Trustees need to explore the options. I think we can get what we need for a lot less money. I think we should not wait, but get on with it.

**Ans. Chair** We do know what is needed. We have an accumulation of the knowledge we have gained. We may have learned what not to do. We have learned some of the specific needs. We need to pull it together; we need to make the floor plan, then we will put a building together.

**Q. Jeanine Dodds.** We need to start with how much this community will approve spending.

**Ans. Chair** Well there are certain things we must have vehicle storage is actually the cheapest type of construction. Reconfiguring the existing hall would contain the more expensive items. What I have been looking at leads me to believe we could bring in something quite nice at a comfortable price.

**Q Ian Dow** What is an example of how much a parcel tax would be.

**Ans. Chair** The numbers that I have crunched to date; for a 6-bay building along side the present fire hall and a renovation would cost approx \$1.2 million. That would be \$60 year for 20 years parcel tax. A ballpark figure only subject to details.

**Ian Dow:** So if it was \$2 million it would be \$100 year.

**Ans. Chair** Yes

**Q. Carol M** The tax issue will have to be addressed before the referendum. If you go to a parcel tax it will have to be collected by the Improvement District and we will have collection costs again.

**Ans. Chair** That is the basis for a whole other meeting. One of the advantages of the parcel tax is that we are already billing for the Health Centre, so we can bill at the same time. Having a payment of \$60 a year it is less likely that a deferment would be required. Also, an advantage of the parcel tax is that you can prepay parcel taxes. I do agree that the Model of taxes to be determined prior to referendum.

**Q. Carol M.** will the Board go ahead with a Poll as the last Board committed.

**Ans. Chair** That is up to the Board and the costs of a poll will be a consideration.

**Q. Jeanine Dodd** Could we do an Informal poll on computer.

**Q. \_\_\_\_\_** Does the tax model stay for all the term or only the current year.

**Ans. Chair** It may be part of the referendum question and then it will stay for the term. If you don't define it, it could be changed every year. The referendum has to include the tax model in the question. This would lock the Board in

**Q.Sid Mister** Are there any subsidies or grants avail from the government

**Ans. Chair** None, the government will only provide funding to regional districts or a municipality.

**Q. Kathie Warning:** You should look into that further. The Task Force did have someone looking into that.

**Ans. Chair** None was found. Both the MP and the MLA promised to assist, but then when it was discovered we are an Improvement District, they could no longer find funding.

**Q. Jeff Francis.** Did North Cedar not use a Blended tax method.

**Ans. Chair** The Ministry said blended taxes are not available. There are often changes in the advice from the Ministry. As Mary said, get it in writing.

**Mary C:** But you can accept donations.

**Ans. Chair** Yes.we can.

**Mary C:**That's not a bad idea people could contribute to the equipment or a vehicle.

**Q. Carol Munro:** The Saturna Fire Hall is run by a non-profit Society and qualified for grants. Could the Improvement District form a non-profit Society?

**Ans. Jeff Francis:**There is already a non-profit Society: the Volunteer Fire Fighters Association with tax receipts available. Contact Bill Jamieson.

**Ans. Chair** In the case of Saturna, they were able to leverage quite a bit of funding from Canada Parks, for example. Frankly Saturna would rather have their own local government.

**Q. Kathie Warning –** There are extra cost now being incurred for them because they are bringing in an architect.

**Ans. Chair** Yes they are bringing him in to finish the appearance of the building.

**Ans. Jeff Fire Chief:** It is built for Saturna's needs not any other island. There are huge differences for Mayne. Their trucks as an example are much smaller than Mayne's.

**Peter Sara:** You asked for input and direction, I think you should ask this audience do you want to wait. Could we have a show of hands,

**Show of hands showed proceeding now is the preferred choice.**

**Ans. Chair** Thank you are there any other concerns.

#### **Other**

**Q. Mary C:** Where does the Temporary Holding Unit stand right now.

**Ans. Chair** The MIHCA is choosing a site on the property.

**Trustee Tracey DeRousie** gave an explanation of the HC AGM conflict so they could not be here today. Also Trustee Gary Akey is at their meeting.

**Mary** I spoke to Cilla about this and she estimated a cost of \$2500. Perhaps we could all donate \$100 to the MICHA

Chair addressed the time for Board meetings: We will be changing it to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday of the month at 9:00 AM . Feedback please. We have had a couple of people say it is difficult to attend on a work day

**Q. Sid Mister** Is there still limited seating capacity?

**Ans. Chair** Yes, there is. We just don't have room.

**Q. Sid Mister** Why not move to another meeting?

**Ans. Chair** The problem with another location is that information is not readily accessible to Staff if questions arise during the meeting. Also the cost of rental was discussed.

**Jeff Francis** – We can move the trucks and meet in the bays.

By moving into the bays this would be a show of confidence for the firefighters.

**Ans. Chair** If it works for you it will work for me.

**Pat Seebach** This was a good meeting, and we should get more people out for the next one if you advertise more please and have the whole Board here.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

The Meeting was adjourned at 2:59PM

Approved:

\_\_\_\_\_  
David Maude, Chair

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Date:

Recorded and presented by:  
Gerrie Wise, Recording Secretary