

February 19, 2020

Mr. David Lietch & Strathcona Régional Board
Strathcona Regional District
301-900 Cedar Street
Campbell River, BC V9W7Z8

Mr. Lietch

I have attached a copy of Noba Anderson's proposal for a new government process on Cortes Island. It appears that she is advocating to take Cortes out of the Strathcona Regional District authority and form an autonomous function that would self govern and self tax.

I am very concerned about a self-selected, volunteer governing group assuming it acts in my best interests and life on this island. I am concerned about Noba Anderson delegating Regional Director authority to an unelected group and its implications for the future. How would this group be held accountable? Noba Anderson has not demonstrated good, fair governance over the majority but rather chosen winners and losers in the bills she has passed.

My reason for bringing this to your attention is to ask that you and staff put some quick figures to this proposal. I would like to know the future property tax and property value implications. It would be important to know the path to redress in case of disputes. Would we on Cortes have an Ombudsman to intervene in these disputes?

Cortes Island is no longer an isolated rural community. There are substantial personal and business investments that need to be protected and served. Gone are the days where "it is the Cortes Way". This is serious business and needs serious people to handle it.

Thanks for your service

Rick Boas

Seeding Cortes Community Council

Join a public discussion & ideation about creating Cortes Community Council:
Saturday, February 15, 3 pm, Manson's Hall. *Free Childcare*

Meeting facilitated by Kristen Scholfield-Sweet & co-sponsored by Folk-U: Cortes' emerging learning lab.

Written by Noba Anderson, Regional Director for Cortes Island - February, 2020

(For the full version, see www.cortesisland.com / Regional Director's page.)

I have yearned for a Cortes Community Council; something that pulls from the old 'ratepayers association' days and adds to it our best thinking about democratic structures. Let's organize locally to build Community Council, to create a space to talk about what most matters in these rapidly changing times; a place to listen together. There is so much emerging right now on the Island. What is being called for is a different way of organizing ourselves; a way that is not about any one elected representative, person, party, or way of thinking. How can we create a new way of governing ourselves? What would Council do? Who would it be? How would it be formed? How can we take old wisdom and re-weave it with new ways of knowing, thinking and acting, so that we can better prepare for our future challenges? What new version could arise? I don't have the answers, but together I *know* that we can bring a remarkable creation into being.

To learn about ratepayers associations I visited Hornby Island to find out about their present day Ratepayers' Association and spoke with Bruce Ellingsen about Cortes' historical equivalent. The BC Regional District structure was created by the Provincial Government in the late 1960s, mostly as an instrument for local service delivery in rural areas. However, before Regional Districts existed, many rural areas organized themselves through a Ratepayers Association which represented property owners/tax (or rate) payers.

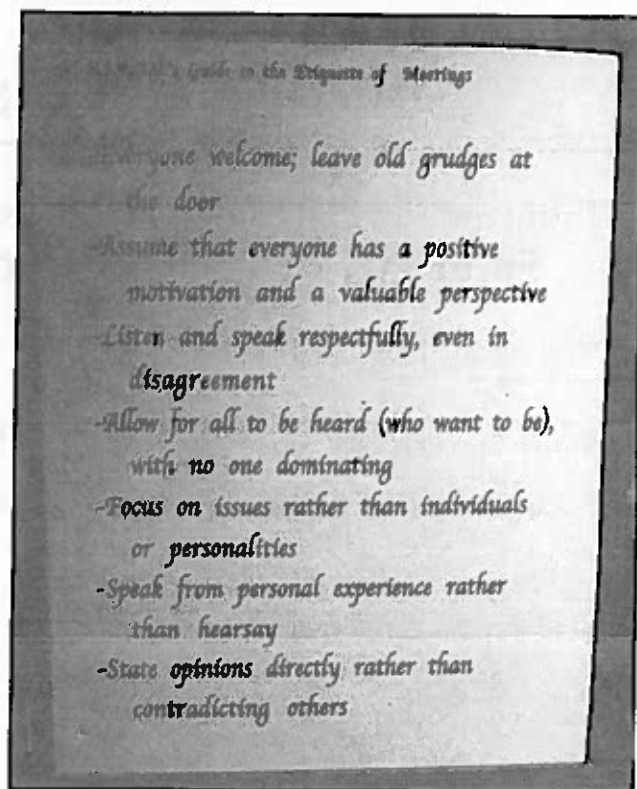
Hornby Island is interesting because it is the most similar gulf island to Cortes and also has a present-day working model of a Ratepayers Association. Although I believe that we can design a Community Council that better fits our needs, theirs is still working for them and worth learning from. The Hornby Island Residents' and Ratepayers' Association (HIRRA) plays a unique role in the administration of Hornby's property tax dollars. In partnership with the Comox Valley Regional District, volunteers on HIRRA committees manage and oversee the local delivery of many Regional District services including recreation, fire protection, waste management and the free store, parks, and community halls. As far as I can tell, HIRRA is truly at the organizational heart of the island and works for the benefit of the whole community.

HIRRA extends free lifetime memberships to all Island property owners (regardless of their nationality or where they live) and all residents who have lived there for the last 6 months or more. At their Annual General Meeting their membership elects a 4 person executive as well as some 60 people to sit on its many committees. HIRRA holds monthly public meetings where all their business is discussed openly. These meetings are now conducted according to their *Guide to the Etiquette of Meetings*, which has greatly helped with decorum. (See photo on reverse.)

The Hornby Island Community Vision Statements constitute an articulation of the "ideal Hornby Island in the year 2020". Its Vision states: "Hornby Islanders intimately understand this island's natural cycles, its community and its needs. We will continue to find ways to bring as much decision-making power as possible into the hands of the community."

The section on governance states: "In the year 2020, Hornby Island community members support, value and actively participate in an innovative model of autonomous governance. This new structure is responsive to the community, encourages and facilitates egalitarian participation and is based on the principles of consensus building and cooperative conflict resolution."

Cortes Island too used to have a Ratepayers Association in the 1900s which was an important part of the Island's political functioning and dealt directly with the Provincial Government on issues affecting the Island. I spoke with Bruce Ellingsen, an elder and lifetime Island resident, who was on the Ratepayers executive. "Things were simpler then" Bruce began. "The Ratepayers Executive was elected yearly at the Society's Annual General Meeting. Everything was done on a volunteer basis." The Ratepayers negotiated with the Province to bring in both BC Hydro and the ferry, helped develop Subdivision and Land Use bylaws and the original Official Community Plan, and advocated to external agencies as needed. I asked Bruce to reflect on the overall value of the Ratepayers as we contemplate creating a new Cortes Council. "It provided a space where local issues could be fully discussed, a forum to speak to issues that mattered. The Ratepayers worked issues through to a consensus before sending them on to the Regional District or wherever. We didn't leave it to outsiders to determine what happened on Cortes!"



Going Forward we need a renewed space for our community to hear its own voice. Listening beyond ourselves must become a way of life. A community that stops listening gets sick, and we have some community health matters which need our attention.

Our current formal governance model is a very different approach from the Ratepayers days of community discussion and consensus building. We have a regional district system that, by its very nature regardless of the people involved, leaves decisions off-island with a group of people that know little about our community. This is not Cortes Community Council. Re-creating the Ratepayers is also not an option as it was the creature of a very different time. There is now an abundance of community organizations that have created more spaces in which to discuss community matters but also pull our collective attention in so many directions. Although these groups provide a quilt-work of great local work, this grass-roots layer of local governance has, as of yet, little internal unity. In its current form, it neither is Cortes Community Council.

So... what to do? ... In this time of chaos and change, we know that we cannot fix our present-day problems with the same thinking that got us into them. I imagine a group of you who dedicate yourselves to learning from other models, consulting our community, and recommending a form and function for a Cortes Community Council. Come imagine together! Ask the hard questions. Offer valuable critique. Bring your ideas. And above all, bring your love for this remarkable place.

I hope to see you Saturday, February 15th, 3 pm, Manson's Hall. *Free Childcare*. Co-sponsored by Folk-U

Warmly, Noba Anderson

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