

LANDOWNER FORUM - DISCUSSION SUMMARY
Thursday, November 19th, 2020 via Zoom

Host: Philippe Kruchten
Moderator: Don Enright

Attending:

Trustees: Mike Sywulich, John Glover, Al Maxwell, Doug Hill and Philippe Kruchten

Staff: Manager Ian Cocker, Administrator Moira McCulloch

Owners: David Boal, Bob Wilband, Robert Aguayo, Leanne Denis, Don Barthel, Linda Jones and Al Wallace

PLEASE NOTE: Trustees, Staff and Don Enright's comments have been personalized. In the interests of protecting some degree of privacy, individual property owners have not been personally identified in the discussion summary, merely identified as "Property Owner".

The meeting began at 7:02 PM

Welcome & Introductions by Don Enright:

Don Enright explained that this was an informal meeting, and that no motions would be made, nor votes taken. This is a Pilot Landowner Forum to establish the merits of such a process and whether facilitating other forums will be meaningful to property owners. That an hour had been set aside and the intent was to try to keep the discussions within that time-frame.

Trustees and staff were introduced.

Participants were invited to raise a hand if they wished to speak, and use the Chat feature to ask questions, or make comment/s.

Participants were asked to mute their phones or computers if there was background noise from their locations.

1. VPID Finances:

The VPID Board of Trustees are in the process of developing the 2021 budget. What are the priorities you think we should be focussing on?

Property Owner:

Adequate supply of water? Usage education?

Mike Sywulich:

Well 19 is targeted to be on line for May 1, 2021 and is expected to produce 5 to 10 gallons per minute. Depending on how long it is operated, we expect it may add from 5-6,000 gals per day.

We are in the process of developing a 3-year rolling plan, part of which addresses education.

We are targeting to reduce the accumulated operating deficit by reducing taxes and increasing tolls.

Sewer Loan was paid down by \$150,000 this year. About \$27,000 remaining on one of our Water Loans, which we look to pay out in 2021.

Property Owner:

No new capital expenditures, only what is essential. Reduce operating costs.

Mike Sywulich:

Budgeted \$15,000 in 2021 to finish Well 19 which we consider an essential investment. Capital Improvements in 2021 budget is \$16,000, so it's a minimal amount.

The intent is to bring VPID into the black over the next 2 years and make sure we have an adequate net reserve.

2. Communications:

VPID has quarterly update letters sent via email and posted on notice boards located at the community mailbox sites within VPID boundaries. What more can be done?

Don Enright:

Asked for any information on what platform everyone will use? VPID posts information to their website, notice boards, and sends out email and/or mailed newsletters to all property owners. What else can we do?

John Glover:

We also send out messages on the monthly invoices

Property Owner:

To increase participation in forum, send out reminder email in the last few days before the date.

Property Owner:

We find the emails timely and informative. Appreciate the forum for part-timers.

3. VPID Website

Are people using it and what can be done to increase usage?

Don Enright:

The VPID website has been up for a few years. VPID had originally piggy-backed on the Mayne Island Integrated Water Systems Society (MIWSS) website. How can we be more effective?

Property Owner:

The Forum not listed as an event. Not enough reminders sent out.

Property Owner:

Thrilled to be here. Thanks for the excellent response to enquiries, always timely, very clear and precise. Broaden range of communications.

Property Owner:

Show daily storage volumes on website

Al Maxwell:

The board have discussed this on a number of occasions. We were concerned about creating a sense of panic. Perhaps property owners are more supportive of conservation now. Will certainly be a topic on the next board meeting agenda.

Don Enright:

Ian & Phil are very skilled at adjusting the flow of water. Concern in the past has been that if we say storage is at 100% then people might overuse water.

Property Owner:

The issue should be about water usage and consumption. Shouldn't waste time on property usage.

4. Rentals and B&B's:

VPID has several houses being used for rentals and B&B's. Why do people think this is a problem?

Property Owner:

Short Term Vacation Rental's (STVR's) are an Islands Trust issue. Report the property and let them deal with it.

Al Maxwell:

Concurred with Property Owner. Stated that VPID has one owner who operates an Air B&B and based on discussions with said owner, they are diligent in their conservation messaging to guests. Further, they had discussed installing their own metering device that would allow long-distance monitoring of water usage.

Mike Sywulich:

Property owners can do whatever they like with their properties. Our responsibilities are managing the provision of water and the usage thereof. VPID currently have 2 long-term rentals and 2 B&B's who advise us of their operating periods, and they pay double water tolls when operational. The issue is with STVR's which are not permitted on Mayne Island. We have challenged those properties we have been led to believe are operating as STVR's, all of whom have denied doing so. There is little more we can do without specific evidence of misuse of water.

John Glover:

Suggested that a number of properties have ads for Air B&B's and suggested the matter should be more vigorously addressed.

Mike Sywulich:

B&B's are not an illegal use of the property.

Property Owner:

Sympathised saying this was not an easy issue to manage. Bring it back to the issue of consumption levels. Does VPID have a rating of water usage?

Don Enright:

VPID installed a number of meters as part of the research initiative begun in 2018, to try to establish differing usages of water between various types of households, e.g. retired, families, size of homes, etc. Don asked Ian if he had any comment in this regard.

Ian Cocker:

No specific differences in water usage based on meter readings.

Moira McCulloch:

In following up allegations of STVR's, Air B&B's, etc., it was discovered that one B&B who did not have their own website, were found to have been assigned a website by Google. This rogue website had been populated with photographs from random houses, some of them from within VPID boundaries. Those property owners were contacted and strongly denied running such a business on their properties. The caution was offered to not always believe what you see in an ad. It might not be truthful. The rogue site had been reported to Google.

Property Owner:

Expressed concern about policing people/properties. Was disappointed that the vote regarding metering failed in 2017. That it's all about water consumption. Greater effort and commitment to monitor usage. Would support metering. That their property could not accommodate running a B&B. Their interest was in water management, not finding a loophole to consume water.

5. Metering:

What are people's thoughts about metering?

Al Maxwell:

Explained that a Metering Standing Committee had recently been re-established and was made up of 3 trustees and 4 property owners (in principle there are 4 trustees as the Chair is included in each standing committee, but has no vote). A vast amount of information on metering had been reviewed and the intent was now to bring it into a framework suitable for VPID. Reasonable expectation of water consumption per household. A survey would likely be sent out in due course. Report to the board prior to the 2021 AGM.

Property Owner:

Referenced the 2017 AGM vote. \$400,000 for a metering system which would likely be \$500,000 now. It has to be a system that doesn't take a lot of staff time to monitor and read. Charge people for what they use and give a break to part-time people. 3-month decrease. \$6 per month increase to do that. Look at water and sewer.

Don Enright:

The 2017 AGM vote was for financing meters, not to implement metering.

Al Maxwell:

Certain assumptions were made, not sure they were warranted. Must tread lightly on differential on rates. The issue needs a full sounding to get to the bottom of it.

Property Owner:

Their issue is not about less or more. The concern is about managing the highs and lows of water usage. Receiving messages about being in dire straits with what we have left. More concerned about water being cut off during the summer.

Don Enright:

Gulf Islanders are already very good water managers. The entire group's water usage is well below the national average. The question is whether metering is worth the cost.

6. Drilling Wells:

VPID drilled a new ell near the Tank Farm. What effect does a new well have on the surrounding wells?

Ian Cocker:

No effect on surrounding wells. Different depth to other wells. Different chemistry than other wells on Deacon Hill. Referenced wells in the '70's, that Well 9 did affect the wells to the East. There had been no indication that wells to the West had been affected.

Property Owner:

Is well 19 registered and does VPID have first right to wells? An example was cited of having first rights to water based on date of registration.

Ian Cocker:

Well 19 is not registered yet. VPID will come first because of rating. It will be registered when we apply for source approval.

Al Maxwell:

VPID are on the registration program but the government is scrambling to register all the wells.

Ian Cocker:

Well 19 has been documented by the well driller but it doesn't go to the government until finalization of the well and we have met the Canadian Drinking Water Standards.

Through monitoring over the past three years, we believe overconsumption has to do with some people using VPID water to fill rainwater tanks.

Property Owner:

They welcome Well 19. How do we forecast production for next summer?

Ian Cocker:

We had full storage in 2019 until COVID hit. Then it dropped 1% every week and 1% every day during summer. Well 19 will help manage that. We're currently only running 3 wells to sustain storage levels. We're capable of pumping 20,000 gal per day in summer. Well 19 will help that. According to Islands Trust, a number of Gulf Island properties have changed hands this year. Mayne Island school attendance risen from 14 to 40 students.

IN CLOSING:

Property Owner:

Thanked Don Enright for moderating.

Don Enright:

Thanked everyone for attending. Asked Mike Sywulich how owners could address questions moving forward.

Mike Sywulich:

Either by direct contact with him or the administrator.

Mike Sywulich: (604) 263-6579 or mikes@vpid.ca

Moira McCulloch: (250) 655-0844 or vipd@shaw.ca (who would forward enquiry as necessary)

The Landowner Forum ended at 8:02 PM.