

## 2007 Regional Director Retrospective

Each year I am required to file a full report outlining regional district business conducted during the year. Meetings are the method by which Regional District business takes place and in 2007 I attended 119. Here's a brief overview of the regional district boards and committees I served on and the business addressed by each. ***Regional District Board***-Comprising of 20 directors, this board determined how recommendations from all other committees are handled. ***Committee of the Whole***-Comprising of all 20 directors, this committee considered general government, corporate matters and service matters for all areas. ***Community Services Committee***-Comprising of 8 electoral area directors, this committee considered planning matters in rural areas. ***Executive Committee***-Comprising of 8 directors, this committee considered mostly confidential (in-camera) matters regarding labour and legal issues. ***Select Audit Committee***-Comprising of 4 directors, which drafted numerous recommendations addressing the discretionary aspect of the expense bylaw, all of which were ratified by the Board. ***Regional Hospital District Board***-Comprising of 20 directors, this board considered budgetary decisions pertaining to delivery of hospital services in the area. It also considered the location of the proposed regional hospital. It is a separate entity from the Regional District Board. In addition I attended conventions, public hearings and meetings, both on and off island, regarding a variety of island concerns.

Below is a quick recap and update of the important issues Cortes faced in the past year.

### ***Governance-RD Separation/Official Community Plan Review***

On July 13, 2007, Minister of Community Services, Ida Chong, sent a letter announcing the division of the Comox-Strathcona Regional District. Minister Chong outlined the amalgamation of areas A & K, and G & H, which means the loss of two rural directors, one from each new regional district, after the upcoming November election. Cortes was not included in the amalgamation plans and island residents will once again elect a regional representative. Cortes will be the smallest electoral area in the new Strathcona Regional district, both in geographic size and population. Inaugural meetings for the two new regional districts are scheduled for February 15. How local governance in the new regional district will function is unfolding slowly.

The impact of the announced division affected Cortes immediately—it is the reason the Official Community Plan (OCP) review was shelved. The review never proceeded beyond one general informational meeting, postponing the necessary and overdue work needed to move forward with a number of outstanding concerns requiring island wide policies and future mapping. Affordable Housing is an example of one concern needing island wide discussion to determine appropriate policies, zoning and location. I hope to resuscitate the OCP review process in 2008. If successful this would be the first major planning piece developed by the new Strathcona Regional District.

### ***Regional Hospital Location***

The Comox-Strathcona Regional Hospital Board (CSRHB), at its May meeting, passed a motion recommending Comox Valley as the best site for a regional hospital facility. In August this Board resolution was deferred to a task force made up of 1 general practitioner and 1 specialist from both the Comox Valley and Campbell River medical communities. This group was tasked with recommending the most appropriate

location for the regional hospital and that the decision be made by consensus. In December the local newspapers announced that the Task Force was unable to reach consensus on the regional hospital location. The CSRHB will formally receive the Task Force Report at its February meeting and the regional hospital location debate will continue.

### ***Hydro/Telus Services***

Hydro and Telus representatives held a public meeting in June to listen to concerns from island residents. Positive outcomes of that meeting are outlined below.

BC Hydro successfully found a location to construct a new equipment storage building in the Gorge Harbour area. BC Hydro had determine that the protected waters of the Gorge Harbour would offer better, consistent landing opportunities for floatplanes during stormy weather. Ideally, this will facilitate better response time during power failures. Those traveling to the Gorge Hall will have noticed the construction of this building

In October, Telus recognized the need to change the equipment and battery plants in the Whaletown area. The goal is to have back-up battery capacity of 24 hours during power outages. At the June meeting, residents also expressed interest in Telus supplying ADSL. Discussions with a Telus representative have been ongoing. Once I get answers to a few outstanding questions I plan to have an update meeting with interested individuals.

### ***Beach Access Trails***

As you may be aware, the regional district and the Ministry of Transportation have (at long last) finalized agreements, which authorize the regional district to develop and manage access trails through the Hayes, Moon, Seascape and Gnat Road beach accesses. The Friend's of Cortes Island (FOCI) is the island organization responsible for stewardship of the newly acquired beach access trail sites and their stewardship role is recognized through a letter of agreement with the regional district.

The Cortes Island beach access initiative is now moving forward and, although some trail development work has commenced on the Moon Road beach access, there is a significant amount of work that remains to be completed with the assistance of community volunteers. The regional district needs to know that the trails are constructed safely and properly and in a timely manner. With the confidence Cortes has competent trail builders, the call for volunteers and donations to complete the Moon Road trail has run in the local flyers.

The trail development day for the Moon Road is scheduled for February 16<sup>th</sup> and Ryan Harvey, working through FOCI, will be on site to direct volunteers in what needs to be done. To meet regional district insurance requirements all volunteers wishing to work on beach access trails must be on FOCI's list of park volunteers. If you want to be a trail volunteer please leave a message with Sarah Downey at 935-0087, or drop in and see her at the FOCI office, which is open on Fridays from 1 to 4 pm.

Looking forward to successful trail building on the 16<sup>th</sup>. Bring materials listed in the flyers, appropriate tools and your enthusiasm. Thank you for your participation in this Cortes Island initiative.

Upcoming works are being planned this year for the Seascape and Gnat Road beach access sites. Stay tuned for notice of volunteer opportunities to assist in the

development of these sites. Ideally all will go well and all licensed beach access trails will be completed by the year's end.

### ***Whaletown Commons***

Currently, there are five active regional parks on Cortes. Four (Kw'as Park, The Skate Park, Siskin Forest Park and Trails, and the Blind Creek Boat Ramp) are located on the southern end of the island. The fifth is the Carrington Bay Park.

One of the goals for islanders has been to acquire regional parkland in other populated areas of the island. Whaletown has been seeking parkland for many years and the Whaletown Commons Society (WCS) was formed to facilitate reaching that goal. In early 2006 the Regional Board passed a resolution earmarking the Park Acquisition Reserve Fund, and a portion of the Capital Reserve Fund to bring this goal closer to reality. The Park Acquisition Reserve Fund collects cash from developers in lieu of parkland dedication. These funds cannot be used for maintenance or capital projects but are collected for the sole purpose of acquiring parkland. That fund contained \$68,606.13 when the board resolution passed. Since this fund was earmarked for acquisition of parkland in the Whaletown area, private donations totaling \$6525. have been contributed to that account. The portion set-aside specifically from the Capital Reserve Fund reflects the tax assessment base of the Whaletown area. 20% of tax collected in the past two years for the Capital Reserve Fund, representing \$13,293, has been earmarked for Whaletown parkland. (Any expenditure from either of these funds requires a motion by the regional board.)

The Whaletown Commons Society, which has 269 members representing a broad cross-section of island residents, holds an additional \$47,225 pending acquisition of a strategic parcel owned by Island Timberlands. Island Timberlands has been aware of community interest in this parcel but took the parcel off the market in June 2006. They have been undergoing restructuring since then. Representatives plan to view their Cortes land some time this year. In the mean time, the best strategy is to continue raising money to be financially ready when an appropriate opportunity presents itself.

### ***Skate Park Toilet***

Just before Christmas a single vault toilet was installed adjacent to the Skate Park. This facility will address the concerns associated with the lack of a toilet facility not only at the skate park but the Manson's Landing downtown area, as well. The CSRD Park Staff worked closely with the executive of the Southern Cortes Community Association (SCCA) to find a workable solution to this particular community challenge. Ian Disney deserves special thanks, for being on-hand with appropriate equipment to assist with the installation.

### ***Blind Creek Boat Ramp***

In 1991, the Regional District received a License of Occupation from the Province for a boat ramp in Cortes Bay. An asphalt ramp was installed and sometime afterwards local residents installed a float. Unfortunately, the float was not approved by either the Regional District or the Province and subsequently was removed. In 2001 the asphalt ramp had deteriorated and a three-phase plan for the site was developed, which included a concrete ramp, expanded day-us parking and a float with approach. The concrete ramp was poured in 2002 and the parking was addressed in fall 2006. I have had minimal (2) requests for the final, most expensive phase of the project—the approach and float. However, this project has been tentatively added to the 2009 work plan. The

park budget is set in November of each year and before this phase moves forward clear indication that this installation has broad community support would be appreciated.

If you have any questions about these or any other issues feel free to contact me at 935-6488 Monday through Friday 9:00 am to 4 pm. (No early morning, late night or weekend calls, please.) If you get the answering machine try my cell phone--202-6488. You can also email me at [brijen@oberon.ark.com](mailto:brijen@oberon.ark.com) anytime.

*Respectfully Submitted by Jenny Hiebert—Regional Director*