

**OTTER POINT & SHIRLEY
RESIDENTS & RATEPAYERS ASSOCIATION
INFORMATION UPDATE FOR JULY 2003**

OPSRRA is a representative community organization with an elected Board of Directors and strives to present the points-of-view of the residents of the rural communities of Shirley and Otter Point to local government. It was founded in 1992 and has a membership of about 350. Lifetime memberships are \$5.00 and available from OPSRRA directors—see our web site (www.opsrra.com) for further information.

The purpose of our society is to:

1. Ensure that the development of the two communities of Shirley and Otter Point takes place in an orderly way and in the best interests of its residents.
2. Co-operate with local government and other public bodies in the furtherance of the objectives of the society and benefits to the community.
3. Concern itself with the performance of government agencies.
4. Encourage citizens to stand for public office.
5. Promote community spirit and sense of identity by organizing or supporting appropriate activities.

OPSRRA’s EXECUTIVE AND DIRECTORS

Ken Pungente	President	Arnie Campbell	Vice President
Wendy Miller	Secretary/Treasurer		
Byron Tweedy	Director	Mitch Moneo	Director
Virginia Boyd	Director	Wendy Morton	Director
Frances Stocks	Director		

SEAPARC PUBLIC MEETING IN SHIRLEY

Date: Saturday, July 19

Time: 9:00 a.m. to noon

Place: Shirley Community Hall

The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the dedication of parkland prior to the approval of a proposed residential development at Sheringham Point. Information packages are available from the Reception Area at the Seaparc Pool, adjacent to the Arena on Phillips Road, Sooke.

UPDATING OF THE JUAN de FUCA ELECTORAL AREA VOTER'S LIST

OPSRRA has been trying to get the CRD or the province to up-date the local voter's list. Last fall's elections for Regional Director and School Trustees used an out-dated voters list that ranged from being 20 to 40% inaccurate, depending on where you resided with the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area. Many long time residents of the area were not registered and others who had moved away or deceased (from as long as seven years ago) were still showing as voters. These problems were documented and shared with the CRD, the local Regional Director and our MLA. Suggestions were made about how to possibly correct some of the errors—short of doing an expensive enumeration. Both the Province and the CRD have now replied to OPSRRA stating that they have no intention of up-dating our voters list. What is ironic is that Elections B.C. has recently released a discussion paper on voter registration in B.C. (check the Elections B.C. website: <http://www.elections.bc.ca> for a copy). They and the Province are concerned about the large number of unregistered voters in the province. "What has emerged (from the study) is the fact that the present voters list only contains approximately 70% of eligible voters, currency of the list appears to be well below the traditionally accepted benchmark of 85%, and accuracy may also be below acceptable standards." One of the suggestions from the Elections B.C. discussion paper is particularly relevant to our local voters list: a universal, continuous voters' list "...that would permit individuals to register to vote in *federal, provincial and local* elections in B.C.". OPSRRA intends to pursue this with Elections B.C., our local MLA and the Regional Director.

LOCAL BUS SERVICE

Otter Point has been without a local bus service for the last five years. OPSRRA has decided to again raise this matter with B.C. Transit. One suggestion is to have a smaller commuter bus do a loop from Sooke along Otter Point Road and then back to Sooke via Kemp Lake Road or continue along Otter Point Road to Gordon's Beach and then back to Sooke along the West Coast Road. Given that we all support local transit through our property and provincial gas taxes, a local bus connection to downtown Sooke, with links to regional public transit, seems to be a reasonable request.

SEWERS FOR SOOKE—OUTFALL EFFLUENT INTO OTTER POINT?

The District of Sooke has recently been awarded a federal/provincial grant towards the eventual installation of sewers in a major portion of downtown Sooke and the Broom Hill Subdivision. OPSRRA has no objection to the sewerage of Sooke, but continues to object to the proposed discharge of effluent into the ocean. The proposal to use an outfall off the Sooke Bluffs to discharge partially treated sewage is offensive to the environment and could have a detrimental effect upon the local tourism, commercial fishing and charter boat businesses in our area. Also, OPSRRA sees the discharge of sewage into the ocean, in our local area, as establishing a precedent that could see this form of disposal being used in other development projects along our coastline.

CRD SLUDGE MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

On a related note, the CRD Environmental Services is advertising for one volunteer from the Metchosin, Highlands, Sooke, Juan de Fuca Electoral Area to sit on a committee that would develop recommendations on where to place a sludge processing facility somewhere in the CRD. A copy of the committee's terms of reference is available at www.crd.bc.ca/es/lw or by calling the CRD Hotline at 360-3030.

SCHOOL DISTRICT #62 SCHOOL BUS LEVY

The local School District has approved a school bus user fee to offset their transportation budget shortfall. OPSRRA feels that this is an unfair additional cost for parents in our area. The following is the text of a letter OPSRRA recently sent to the local School District:

June 27, 2003

Mr. Dave Drummond
Superintendent of Schools
School District #62 (Sooke)
3143 Jacklin Road
Victoria, BC V9B 5R1

Dear Mr. Drummond:

I am writing on behalf of the Otter Point and Shirley Residents and Ratepayers Association to voice our objection to the introduction of school bus fees by the School District #62 (Sooke).

We believe the fee, which will amount to as much as \$300 annually for some families, places an unfair financial burden on rural families, particularly those with low or modest incomes, whose children attend schools in the Milne's Landing Zone of the school district.

As you are aware, all the public schools within the Milne's Landing Zone are located within the municipality of Sooke—there are no schools located in the rural area of Otter Point or Shirley. To mitigate the fact that Otter Point and Shirley residents are not within close proximity of a school, the school district has provided bus service to our students. We believe this has been of mutual benefit. Rural students have been provided equal access to school. The school district has not had to incur the capital and operational costs associated with building and maintaining a school within our community.

Rural families and students already are at a disadvantage from their urban counterparts with respect to transportation issues around participation in school-sanctioned and unsanctioned extra-curricular activities, particularly since there is no public transportation in our areas. They realize that attending these events is optional, and often are forced to make difficult decisions. However, for most rural families, sending their children to school on the school bus is not optional, it is a necessity. It is patently unfair for the school district, particularly a district like Sooke, which encompasses such a large rural area, to force some individuals to essentially pay a fee to have access to school.

While we recognize that the school district faces fiscal challenges, we respectfully suggest that the school district looks at charging fees for programs and services that are optional, rather than those that are necessities, to balance its budget.

Sincerely,

Ken Pungente, President
Otter Point and Shirley Residents and Ratepayers Association

REGIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY

This CRD bylaw initiative is about to be passed into law. The Town of Sidney and the municipality of Central Saanich were the last two communities to agree to the draft bylaw. They have now agreed to a wording change to do with the frequency of the growth strategy review process. With the anticipated passage of the bylaw this fall, all of the communities in the CRD will have agreed to manage their growth and development in a manner that protects green space, limits population growth in rural areas and promotes growth in existing urban areas. Check the CRD website for more details. While the RGS will support the continued rural nature of Shirley and Otter Point, our urban containment boundaries have yet to be established. This will be done over the next two years as part of our first Official Community Plan (OCP).

OTTER POINT / SHIRLEY / JORDAN RIVER COMMUNITY PLAN

The long awaited review of our Official Community Plan (OCP) is to begin. The Planning Services Department of the CRD has received applications from members of the community who have expressed an interest in serving on the OCP and will be confirming appointments by the end of June.

The current OCP for Shirley and Otter Point was completed in 1995 and adopted by the CRD in July of 1996. Completion of a new Official Community Plan is long overdue and is extremely important for at least four reasons:

1. The Official Community Plan becomes a vision for how the communities should develop over at least the next five years.
2. It allows public participation in deciding how we want our community to grow, and where we want that growth to be.
3. The Official Community Plan identifies zoning and suitable land use (e.g. recreation, industrial, green space, watershed) for our area.
4. The Official Community Plan will be used by the CRD Regional Growth Strategy to ensure that our area remains rural in character by limiting development and subdivisions to capacities identified in the OCP.

Be aware that developing an updated OCP could take up to a year; it involves public meetings to seek community input as well as working with the CRD Planning staff, the Regional Director and the recently elected Area Planning Commission.

SOOKE BOUNDARY RESTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

The Boundary Restructure Committee has been adjourned until September. The original plan was for the committee to have hosted community information sessions and public meetings in Otter Point, Shirley and East Sooke in early April. This plan was delayed by the discovery of some incomplete information concerning the managed forest lands north of Otter Point and Shirley. This incomplete information could have changed the

calculation of estimated property taxes in rural areas after amalgamation. However, it was the untimely death of Sooke's Mayor in April and the need for a by-election in that community that resulted in a request, by the District of Sooke, to the Province for a delay in the resumption of the work of the committee until September.

Both the province and the CRD have stated that no amalgamation will happen without a referendum. OPSRRA has lobbied for and supports this position.

This newsletter is published monthly on the opsrra.com web page by OPSRRA (The Otter Point and Shirley Residents and Ratepayers Association). Comments or requests to have information included in the newsletter can be directed to Arnie Campbell, Vice President. Phone (250) 642-3113 or e-mail d.acampbell@shaw.ca