

Reprint **Island Tides**

Visit www.islandtides.com for more interesting articles on other BC, national & international topics

Reprint from Volume 18 Number 3

February 23, 2006

Pender OCP meeting—STVR again!

An Official Community Plan public information meeting held by the North Pender Island Local Trust Committee on Saturday, February 10, was intended to focus on Development Permit Areas (DPA). But some of the people who came—up to a hundred at one point—wanted to talk about Short Term Vacation Rentals (STVR) again, following a recent decision by the LTC to continue the ban on STVR in the draft OCP. Enforcement of the historical STVR prohibition has been subject to a moratorium while the OCP was under review.

Development Permit Areas

Planner Robert Kojima opened the meeting with a comprehensive presentation on DPA. He noted that DPA could be declared for protection of the environment, for the protection of areas where building would be hazardous, and for the control of building form and size in intensive residential, commercial and industrial zones. But DPA could not be used to vary the use or density of zones as set out in the Land Use Bylaw. Following Kojima's presentation, DPA were hardly mentioned for the rest of the day.

Water Recharge

Trustees also noted that they were seeking ways to protect the water supply recharge area for the Magic Lake water system, which serves some 80% of the population of North Pender.

Short Term Vacation Rentals

Islands Trust planner Robert Kojima provided background information for STVR. According to a recent Islands Trust survey of visitor and tourist accommodations on the Islands, North Pender had 81 homes used as STVR in 2005. Using the Trust's estimate of a peak of 5.28 people per unit, this accounted for 55% of the visitor accommodation on North Pender.

Meanwhile, under current zoning, commercial visitor accommodation operations on the Island have significant unused potential for expansion.

Kojima stated that there are currently 1,089 homes on North Pender, yielding a population estimate of some 2,070 residents at an estimated 1.9 residents per home. However, this estimate did not take into account that many of these homes were used seasonally or only on weekends (and thus were not

their occupants' primary residences, so they would not show up in the census), and that some were used only as STVR.

The 2001 census showed a permanent population of some 1,800 people. According to Kojima, current population growth is about 1% per year; he projected North Pender's population at about 2300 to 2500 by the year 2030.

Real estate activity has been significant. Over a recent two year period, 483 homes, representing nearly half the housing stock, had changed hands.

At the OCP meeting, STVR advocates, most of whom either owned properties used as STVR or who did business with STVR owners, revisited all the arguments for summer rentals. Information presented by various speakers included:

- A number of Island businesses claimed that a significant part of their trade occurred in the summertime, though this could not be directly linked to STVR. Other businesses, such as property maintenance and landscaping operations, indicated that STVR represented a significant customer base.

- Several STVR advocates warned of potential litigation if the ban presently in the OCP was enforced.

- Former trustee Em Round revisited the idea that STVR be permitted but regulated (at the moment they are not a permitted use of residential property). They were, he said, a 'way of life' on Pender; banning them, he said, would 'drive them underground.'

- Gulf Islands CRD Director Susan deGryp, who runs a property maintenance business, said that it was now difficult to find housekeepers on the Island, even at \$30 per hour.

- One non-resident STVR owner claimed that, despite a rent of \$1500 per week, expenses and income tax withholding left him with a 'profit' of only \$400 per week. He accused the trustees of bias.

- Numerous opponents of STVRs complained of misbehaviour by summer visitors, and their inability to contact STVR homeowners to complain. It appeared, however, that situations where the owner was lived on the property, such as B&Bs and rented cottages, did not pose such a problem. ☞

© Island Tides Publishing Ltd. This article may be reproduced with this attribution, in its entirety, with notification to Island Tides Publishing Ltd.

'This article was published (February 23, 2006) in 'Gulf Islands, Island Tides'. 'Island Tides' is an independent, regional newspaper distributing 15,000-20,000 copies in the Southern Strait of Georgia from Tsawwassen to Victoria, BC.'

Island Tides, Box 55, Pender Island, BC, Canada.
Email: islandtides@islandtides.com.

Phone: 250-629-3660. Fax: 250-629-3838.
Website: <http://www.islandtides.com>