

Pump station moving from Croteau Road to Beech Street

The regional district sewage commission unanimously approved a motion from Ken Grant to stop work on a proposed sewage pump station at Croteau Road. But the Comox director's second motion to direct energies to a site at Beech Street, and to schedule a public meeting, passed by a 4-3 vote. Courtenay directors Bob Wells, Erik Eriksson and Manno Theos were opposed.

"We have an imminent problem that needs to be solved," Grant said at Tuesday's meeting. "We had a site on Beech Street...I know that won't be popular with everybody but we do have to look at the greater good, and we do have to get on with this project."

Area B director Rod Nichol feels neither Croteau nor Beech are viable options.

"The No. 2 pump station seems like it's a Band-Aid effect," he said.

"If expedience is what you want in this project, then take your eyes off the Croteau/Beech area. It's a no-go. You're going to have a fight like you've never had before."

"We have a problem in Courtenay and Comox, and we decided as a regional board to go into somebody else's neighbourhood, dig up their roads, and stick a giant sewage pump in there to solve our problem," Eriksson said. "That doesn't quite sit right with me."

A new Comox No. 2 pump station is required to resolve an environmental risk associated with the CVRD's wastewater forcemain along Willemar Bluff. It's also needed to increase pumping capacity at the Courtenay and Jane Place pump stations.

Opponents fear the project will damage trails, block beach access, disturb archeological remains and have a negative impact on ground water.

A hydrological survey expects groundwater impacts to be low for Croteau and Beech.

The project would facilitate the installation of a forcemain from Croteau to the wastewater treatment plant, bypassing the bluff near Goose Spit.

The area at the base of Croteau is an unopened road right-of-way, half-owned each by the Town of Comox, and the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure. Manager of engineering services Marc Rutten said the right

of way would be closed about 18 months during construction, which drew some rumbles from the audience.

A minimal wetwell size allows about 15 minutes of storage.

A large, deep trench is required from Comox Harbour to the pump station, which would impact the First Nations midden at the base of the right of way. Eriksson suggests a third, regional option could connect with the Hudson/Greenwood trunk, with West Courtenay sewage going south and East Courtenay sewage going east. While this solution would help alleviate flow at the Courtenay station, the Hudson/Greenwood trunk projects won't provide enough benefit to offset the required upgrade at Courtenay, Rutten said.

"The other issue with the south sewer project is it's still several years away," he said.

Sending West Courtenay wastewater to a new south sewer treatment plant doesn't get rid of the flow from Courtenay and Jane Place, and the lines along Willemar Bluff, Rutten added.