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Mayor and Councillors
City of Courtenay

I write to you today to bring up an important and serious matter that needs to be acted upon with some urgency as we will soon be coming into the 2020 camping season.

10 years ago there were 3 sani-dump stations in the City of Courtenay alone - one at the now demolished Husky station on 11th, one at the old Canadian Tire store at Ryan and the bypass, and one at the Husky/Mohawk station at Mansfield and Cliffe.

They have all now closed. Today there is none left at all after the closing of the last dump station at the Cliffe Ave Husky/Mohawk last fall. They closed because there were such line ups that RV units were blocking the driveways and access to their fuel pumps. Comox has no sani-dumps and so that leaves only one for the whole Valley up in Cumberland at the Gas N Go Home store.

Although some commercial campsites have their own onsite sewage disposal systems, the majority campgrounds do not. Miracle Beach Provincial Park and Elk Falls have their own sani-dump stations but most Provincial parks don't. Locally there is Kitty Coleman, Kin Beach, Teepee Park, etc plus all the outback country camping done like Comox Lake and the Upper and lower Campbell Lakes etc. All these have no onsite systems and so everybody brings it all home to the Valley. Even large events like Musicfest have a couple of hundred RVs spending the weekend but then there are no onsite sani-dumps so where do they go to dump after heading towards home?

As everyone knows- the Valley is growing. One only has to drive by the many RV dealers in the Valley to see all the RV units that they load up in their lots every spring and then manage to sell every year! The amount of people and families who spend their weekends and holidays camping in their campers, trailers and motorhomes is growing by leaps and bounds.

So that is the problem and it is really going to show it's ugly head this year starting right after the May long weekend when everybody is returning home from their first major camp of the year!

Where are they going to dump their waste? Human behaviour as it is, we know there will not be many willing to drive all the way up to Cumberland to use the sani-dump at the Home store. So where will they dump it? Back Roads, logging roads, ditches and possibly even storm drains out in their streets!

This is indeed a serious issue and is actually a whole Comox Valley regional issue because RVers live everywhere, either Comox, Courtenay or any of the 3 of the Regional District areas. I even brought this up to two of the Regional directors at an open house they had a couple of weeks ago. I asked had there been any discussion with the City regarding this issue even though it is a Valley wide problem? Courtenay needs to be involved as they have the sewer system to make a sani-dump station work. They said they were not aware of any discussions. That is not good enough.

This cannot be ignored!

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Several Towns, Cities and municipalities own and operate their own sani-dumps not only as a service to their taxpayers but also as a service to the many tourist travellers that you see out on the roads every summer exploring the Island or the rest of the Province or Country. Duncan and Lake Cowichan both operate their own sani-dump stations for example. I am pretty sure we will be the only major municipality on the island that doesn't have a sani-dump station.

I have done some thought and some homework on this and have identified several possible locations within the City itself. There are certain requirements needed, such as-

First there needs to be good access in and out particularly if someone is pulling a 30' travel trailer or larger 5th wheel, so one way in and one way out with lots of room to make wide turns is preferred. A non-residential area of course would be great and a site that is easy to locate and find so that travelling tourists can have an easy time to get to it. There also needs lots of 'stacking' or 'line up' space as there can be 10 or more units lined up waiting their turn on a Sunday afternoon after returning from the weekend trip.

Second. Ease and cost of installation. So some where there is water, sewer and hydro close by.

Third. Designed and built properly by someone who has used sani-dumps before so that it all works successfully. All 3 of the old (now closed) dump stations all sloped away from the drain pan and the sewer pipe so your trailer was actually leaning the opposite way for the tanks to drain properly. Many people had to block up the unit on the opposite side to get it to totally drain. (I am one of them by the way)

I have come up with several potential sites but have decided to review just three here today. The number one site so far from my list is the Dove Creek Place.

Dove Creek Place off Headquarters Rd. The old Dove Creek Road section that used to lead to the single lane bridge. The City limit ends here but the City does own the road. There is a large cul de sac half way down now so Rvs, trailers, etc would turn off Headquarters, drive down and turn around at the cul de sac and return back up to the Headquarters intersection where the sani-dump station would be located. When they realigned Headquarters road to make the curve towards the new Dove Creek bridge, they also had to realign the old Dove Creek road intersection so it would make a 90 deg match for good visibility etc. This created a large gravel area on the south side of Dove Creek Place where the old road used to connect. This would make an ideal location for the sani-dump station in many ways such as-

Acces to Sewer and water. The **sanitary sewer** line ends in a manhole on Headquarters Road at Pebernat road, just some 100- 150' feet away.

The **water main** ends on Headquarters Road even closer as there is a hydrant right around the corner on the west side.

Hydro. There is a hydro pole right in the gravel area that the sani dump would be located. A drop service off that pole would provide for the electrical needs.

Allows for multiple units to line up at busy times all the way up and down both sides of Dove Creek Place

Easy access from Highway 19A down Vanier Dr or East Courtenay from Veterans Memorial Way ,

Also coming from or going to the Inland Island Highway using the Piercy Connector is right there.

No close neighbours to effect.

The only negative is it is fairly secluded and may be susceptible to vandalism.

The old Regional District office site off Headquarters- opposite Vanier School. Good access in, then turn to the left into the old front parking lot. Turning within the parking lot might work to exit back out the same way or add an exit driveway with a new culvert back out to Headquarters on the south side.

There is a water service into the property- probably for the office building and was used up until a few years ago for the compost display area.

Would need to check about sewer but there still might be the sewer service pipe that went to the old office building. Otherwise there is sewer out on Headquarters.

Negatives- Very busy area especially during Saturday morning Farmers Market, MusicFest weekend, Fall Fair etc. Depending on final layout the stacking (waiting lineup) might be only 6-8 units. Con't

Old Farquarhson Farm off the bypass. Reopen the 'right turn' in driveway and they would exit at the north driveway. Southbound RVs can do a left turn in but might be tricky during heavy traffic times.

Easiest site to hook up services. Sewer line and or manhole right there, water service existing and hydro poles also right there including a fairly new drop service for the farm sale buildings recently built last year.

Negatives- ALR land- is this use even possible? Possible negative effect on farm market stand. **Optics** of the whole set up from bypass although a fence on the bypass side could hide the activity.

The facility itself can be a fairly easy to maintain system. This could be accomplished by someone from the Public Works or the Regional District checking on it once every day or two during the summer months but maybe only once or twice a week off season as there wouldn't much activity over the winter months, Another alternative is to either contract it out to a private individual or partner up with a service club like Rotary or the Lions club to look after and maintain the site in exchange for a share of or even all of the income. There are many ways to approach this but action definitely needs to be taken this year!

A properly built station is comprised of four main parts-

The pad and sewer drain itself- concrete pad approx. 5' X 6' sloped to the center sewer pipe and surrounded by a 6" high curb to keep all contents inside.

A wash down water hose, usually hung on a spring from a pole so the hose end cannot touch the ground but is easily maneuvered around. Waterline has both a vacuum breaker and a double backflow preventer. This water pole and line are usually red in colour.

Fresh potable water fill up- Separated by 50-60' away for hygiene purposes (and usually after the sani-dump station) is for the RVer to fill their onboard potable water tanks. This system is usually painted blue and also has back flow preventers built in.

Control and pay system pedestal- This system accepts payment for using the sani-dump and pays income to the City to cover maintenance and servicing costs and possibly even some capital repayment. I found a company that manufactures these systems based in Oregon that has them in 46 States and two Canadian Provinces. I contacted them and they sent me some information regarding their system. They have 5 units on Vancouver Island in 5 different Provincial parks. Miracle Beach, Elk Falls, Rath Trevor, Goldstream and French Beach.

The system takes payments and then unlocks the sewer pipe so the customer can then insert their RV sewer hose and empty their tank. Although they can be run by solar panels in off grid situations, he recommended that with our northern location that electrical power is the way to go. The controller can be set up to take loonies or toonies or credit/debit card payments (using a built in cell service transmitter). He did mention that

depending on location that sometimes just using credit/debit cards only for payments can drastically reduce any chance of vandalism as there would be no coins within.

The equipment and locking mechanism are supplied on a 60 month service agreement with costs as follows-

- A onetime setup fee of \$2400 USD

- \$150 USD per month (\$1800 USD annually) service fee

- Sani-Star provides parts and phone support for the full term

- City gets 100% of the income

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The right hand picture is the Sani-dump station at Elk Falls Provincial Park in Campbell River



Above is a credit/debit card only payment system and the locking mechanism raised to allow drain hose access

As you can see, these systems operate and collect the fees 24/7 and have proven themselves at Provincial Parks, campgrounds, service stations, rest areas and truck stops all across North America.

Even though the (now closed) Mohawk station was only charging a \$5 fee, now that there is none here it would be expected that with a well-designed, functional and easy to use set up that fees in the \$8-\$10 range would be accepted by the general public.

I am willing to do more work into investigating this further such as the proper specifications for the design including sourcing and pricing of some other items that would be needed to get this set up, such as the water stand posts, signage etc.

I plan to meet with the Chamber of Commerce as to inquire about possible business involvement and of course because of the Chambers interest from their own involvement with the Valley Visitors Information Center who will be dealing with sani-dump station inquiries from the traveling visitors.

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I also plan to send a similar styled letter to the Comox Valley Regional District because as this is a Valley wide regional issue, they should also be involved especially on a cost sharing basis.

I would be willing to do a presentation to Council directly so we could go further into more detail and would also be happy to either sit on or even chair a group discussion with staff to get things organized to move forward soon on this very important issue that cannot wait for another year or two to be addressed. Something needs to get going in the next couple of months.

I thank you for your time and hope to hear from you soon.

Wendel Lamb-

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Dove Creek Place site