
Zoning bylaw changes

From Jennelle Stokke [REDACTED]

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To the CVRD Board of Directors and Electoral Area Representatives,

I am writing to address the proposed Comprehensive Zoning Bylaw No. 4710.

I am a property owner in the area of Mesachie Lake, area F, and these new changes are very concerning to me, my family, and my friends and neighbours in my immediate area and throughout the CVRD.

This bylaw, as currently drafted, raises serious concerns about overreach into the reasonable use of private rural property, and the growing burden placed on residents already struggling with affordability in British Columbia.

One issue in particular would negatively impact the life of my family, and that is the drastic changes to rural allowances for keeping chickens and bees.

Limiting the number of chickens on rural acreage properties—especially those over 2 acres—directly impacts residents' ability to support themselves with small-scale food production. Food costs are rising unsustainably, and restricting modest self-sufficiency measures is uncalled for, and harmful.

People choose to buy property and live in rural areas so as to be able to use their properties to provide for themselves. Though we lose the convenience of close proximity to amenities, we get to enjoy a little more freedom to responsibly use our properties as we'd like, and to provide for ourselves, and these new restrictions will prevent them from doing so in a reasonable way. There are many people who own small businesses, based on rural residential properties, that rely on the products generated from chickens and bees as their main source of income. The new restrictions to livestock and hive numbers alone will destroy these businesses, and the lives of the people who own them, overnight.

My own ability to feed my family from the eggs and meat that my modest number of chickens have provided us with for many years, will be removed entirely overnight. We rely on this provision to get us through difficult economic times, and a food source I can feel good about feeding to my family, more than anything I can buy in the stores. Not to mention the incredible value of their composted manure, which feeds my vegetable garden, which in turn also feeds my family and my neighbours.

I also have concerns regarding increasing the restrictions on RVs, trailers, and alternative housing arrangements, and I believe they fail to reflect the reality of our current housing situation. Many families rely on these solutions to manage the cost of their mortgages, support extended family, or provide rental income in an unaffordable housing market.

Shipping containers.

I know many people who utilize sea cans as a strong, secure, and nearly indestructible means to store their tools, equipment, building supplies, furniture, etc, where we can keep an eye on it. It is insurance, that we actually own, for our valuables.

For rural properties, the use of shipping containers is often practical and necessary, and they're often placed with practicality, security, and ease of access in mind. Over-regulating their placement or visibility imposes aesthetic standards that may not reflect the priorities of rural realities.

Punitive Fines.

The introduction of fines up to \$50,000 per offence, compounded daily, is gravely concerning. Such penalties are highly disproportionate to the offences, and would devastate ordinary families over what I believe most would agree are relatively minor, arbitrarily imposed infractions.

And 4 ft tall front fences? In rural residential? How is that deemed reasonable, when we live alongside deer, elk, cougars and bears?

People have a right to protect their families and properties, landscaping, food gardens and livestock from wildlife, in reasonable ways. Tall-enough fences are the MOST reasonable way.

The cost of living in British Columbia is already one of the highest in Canada. Policies that prevent residents from growing/raising food, creating small income streams, and using their own private properties within widely agreed upon reasonable limits, further erodes the ability of families to remain in their communities. Many will leave. Many will feel forced to leave.

There is a growing perception among the wider population of the Cowichan Valley especially those who choose to live rurally, that local governments are moving toward highly restrictive control over private land use, with no consideration for the lived realities faced by rural residents.

For many, this raises fundamental concerns about:
property rights
personal freedom
and the ability to sustain a reasonable standard of living

Residents should not feel that they are losing the ability to responsibly manage and use their own property.

What I and the many, many, many other residents respectfully request of the CVRD:
Reconsider and revise the proposed limits on backyard hens for all rural properties, not just the large ones,
Allow greater flexibility for temporary and alternative housing solutions,

Reduce or eliminate excessive financial penalties,
Reassess regulations on storage containers to better reflect rural needs,
Reassess the height restrictions on front fencing in areas where wildlife actively lives and often interferes with homeowners' safety, landscaping and food production,
Allow for a height cap on fences that better reflects the needs of rural property owners, height that would actually prevent the easy access of elk for example, where necessary,
And engage in meaningful consultation with affected residents before adopting this bylaw.

If these concerns are not meaningfully addressed, many residents are prepared to bring these issues to broader public attention,
engage with media and public forums,
and continue advocating for fair and reasonable land use policies.

This bylaw, in its current form, makes it increasingly difficult for ordinary families to live, work, and remain in this region. Many will feel pressure to up and leave. It infringes on our rural quality of life.

I urge you to take these concerns seriously and ensure that policy decisions reflect the realities and needs of the communities you represent. We have all been talking with each other, even our neighbours within North Cowichan district are concerned. These changes impact ALL of us, and we are all appalled at this drafted proposal. Our votes in October will speak for us, if our concerns are not taken seriously now, and the impact of this may extend into legal action as well, as it pertains to impacts on local business, and major personal financial investment.

We expect our elected officials to maintain the quality of our life with their governance, if not improve them. Not to destroy it.

Sincerely,
a gravely concerned citizen and rural property owner,
Jennelle Stokke
Mesachie Lake, area F



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