

Sandy Hook Community Association

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February 18, 2003

DELIVERED BY HAND

Mrs. Ann Kershaw, the Chair of the Recreation, Cultural and Community Relations Committee
The Mayor and Council
District of Sechelt

Dear Councillor Kershaw, Mayor and Councillors,

Re: Community Relations Policy

This letter is our submission for the forthcoming ‘workshop’ committee meeting regarding this matter. We will be prepared to elaborate on this at the meeting. This letter has been reviewed and approved by our board of directors.

First, please note that there is some confusion over what Council is trying to accomplish with this initiative. We have had to make some assumptions as you will see. If credibility of an organization is questionable we believe that Council is capable of weighing the value of any input from such without draconian rules; rules which may inadvertently preclude perfectly valuable input.

After due consideration, this association has decided that a sincere attempt to reach an accommodation with Council will be worthwhile for good relations in the community now and in the future. With this goal in mind we attach our considered thoughts of some “guidelines” that might be adopted. We sincerely trust that the committee and Council will recognize our honest endeavor to reach an understanding so that some of the unfortunate feelings of the past few weeks may be put behind us all.

As you review the attached pages you will note that we have deleted any comments in respect of three of the “recommendations” that went to Council on February 5th. To clarify:

1. Recommendation #8 – relating to provision of photocopying. This is clearly just an administrative matter to be decided by Council and has no bearing on whether an association is “valid or not”. In any event the gesture itself is so picayune as to not concern us one way or the other. It suggests a total District support for all of the community associations of less than \$1000 and a sum for Sandy Hook of about \$125.00.
2. Recommendation #9 – relating to an informed public should be withdrawn entirely. It appears to be an insulting ‘wrist slap’ to hard working and responsible volunteers and citizens and no Council has the right to chastise the general public in this manner. Moreover the language is so

poorly phrased that it seems to direct the associations to take the matter up with some unidentified third parties. (Note: Language problems creep into other items as well e.g. see #8 where it directs allocation be set 4 times a year – hardly what was intended, we surmise. We assume this is inadvertent and irrelevant.)

Clearly if the ‘interested groups’ were not informed then they would not likely be commenting on this committee’s or this Council’s program in any area.

3. Recommendation #10 – relating to something. We cannot button down what the committee or the Council is trying to convey here and so cannot make any constructive suggestions. It seems to refer to neighbourhood groups requiring approval from Council to do anything that assists the neighbourhood and then, additionally, confirms a one time contribution will be made to any such project but no more!

We hope that Council will recall that a major number of projects initiated by such groups have added to the features that Sechelt Council asserts it desires in an effort to attract visitors and improve the quality of life in the District. Sandy Hook volunteers saved the Sechelt Heritage Forest and built some 10 kilometers of trails; recovered the public park, built the launch ramp, set up the original street signs and just last month cleaned garbage from Sechelt Inlet Road. SHORA volunteers built the community dock – a reclamation project emerging from a desecrated site, filled with polluting debris abandoned by an erstwhile developer. Tuwanek volunteers built the sand spit and anchored it with trees to protect the outlet of Irvine Creek. Davis Bay volunteers maintain their community hall. These are just a few examples of how volunteer groups have enriched the District with or without District approval and rarely, with any single contribution.

This item should be withdrawn entirely.

We hope that the following pages address all of the other recommendations in a constructive and acceptable manner. We look forward to a successful ‘workshop’ and a happy conclusion to the matter.

Yours truly,
Sandy Hook Community Association

Per:
Bob D’Arcy
President

Community Relations Policy - Sandy Hook Ideas

What is Council trying to accomplish? Assume:

1. **Open up meetings and dialogue with groups other than the “G8”.**

This is entirely up to Council and whomever they ask, however, the “G8” are within their rights (as are the other groups) to refuse a joint meeting. I think this is unlikely but should be noted. No more need be said on this question EXCEPT that we would hope that at least quarterly meetings with the G8 would still be entertained.

2. **Identify community associations (hereinafter CA’s) who reasonably represent the community they hail from.**

Without picking on West Sechelt, they are an example of where Council is having problems with credibility. Council advises that they see West Sechelt's signature on a document and they discredit the document knowing that West Sechelt does not seem functional at the moment. They do not want to give credence to a CA which is not functional or representative and certainly do not want to lend any financial support to one.

WE CAN ADDRESS THIS AND SET SOME FAIR CRITERIA.

Using the report of January 16th and subsequent meetings, etc. as only a guide, we effectively start over fresh.

First, put Recommendation #8 (photocopying), #9 (informed?), and #10 (not understood) aside for now.

1. Drop the percentage membership criteria altogether. It is:

- a. Very difficult to set fairly as the percentage might vary with the size of the community.
- b. It will be difficult to define as one gets into arguments about households or residents or renters or voters or absentee property owners.
- c. It will be difficult to establish any fair count as property owners can include empty lots or homes under estate actions. How do two members in one house count? There will be issues of border lines. *An example of the latter is Sandy Hook. Since 1963 the CA has worked with ALL those whose property is accessible by or from Sandy Hook Road. It does not attempt to include Tillicum or those properties lying east of Coracle and really only water accessible. It is unfortunate that these residents are disenfranchised from the CA but there are practical considerations and, further, they have never attempted to join the CA. We believe similar boundary issues exist elsewhere in the District.*
- d. It will be very difficult to police. It introduces calls for membership lists and monitoring of them which has already been flagged as a problem for some CA's. *How often and how hard will the judgments be made?*
- e. It goes against the reasonable principles of participatory democracy. There is no call for all registered voters to vote, for all to belong to a political party or any other mandatory percentage setting and yet we accept the open election as a fair process even when those governing are elected by a minority of the eligible voters. OTHER CRITERIA KEEP OUR DEMOCRACY INTACT.

2. Only accredit CA's which are legally constituted, that is, under the Society's Act. Some may not be there now but this requirement introduces many advantages to the process:

- a. It is in the interests of the CA.
 1. Some protection from liability issues for the board and members
 2. Reservation of name to protect somewhat against rival groups
 3. Introduces some discipline into procedures
- b. To comply with the act certain minimum officers and other criteria are required such as annual general meetings.
- c. To maintain status the CA must function at a level to make its filings
- d. The status of the CA is public knowledge and so this is easy to police.

- e. It is probable, but admittedly not guaranteed, that there is a membership of substance behind a legally constituted group who can and do maintain the filings with the Society's Branch.
- 3. **Membership must be open to ALL residents or property owners in the community.** This important principle of universal suffrage is the key to the democratic process. If some member of the community is unhappy with decisions of the Association he/she can join the association and run for office to enforce their opinion. This is how ALL democratic societies work with no need to belong or to vote but freedom to do so. This is all that is needed to replace Item 1, above.
- 4. **CA's hold at least four meetings per year which are open to all members and this can include board meetings or general meetings.** There may be a reasonable restriction placed on such attendance such as forewarning so that appropriate space will be available.
- 5. **At least four of the required meetings are publicized to the community in a reasonable way.** Publicizing might include newsletters, bulletin board announcements where available, signs at cross roads, web sites, etc. (DOS should be copied in.)
- 6. **The CA's will publish not less than 4 newsletters per year reporting on association interests and these shall be made available to all residents, whether members or not, in some reasonable way.** *With larger numbers, door to door distribution or mail outs may not be practical so setting up of some pickup points will be acceptable and use of the web.* (DOS should be copied in.)
- 7. **Any publication will make it clear that input from all residents or property owners is welcome.**
- 8. **Community Associations shall respond to input from non-members of the association as well as members.** In fact this is already the case in most CA's as non-members call to voice concerns and these are responded to. Hopefully a satisfied or impressed non-member will subsequently join the CA but this not required. CA's are formed of volunteers who wish to help the community not just help a membership. This item in the criteria alone maybe the most important.
- 9. **Two recognized associations cannot represent the same constituency.** If a second or rival organization is in place, or forms later, then it may not be officially recognized except if it applies, meets the other criteria and it can show that it is the most representative of the community. This shall be done by a confidential audit of the membership records of both associations by an independent and neutral entity such as a lawyer, or senior official in another jurisdiction acceptable to both associations. This does NOT preclude another association which represents a different 'community' - even one within another - see SHORA within West Porpoise Bay.

The 9 guidelines above should, we believe, meet a reasonable standard for Council to decide on accreditation. Council should consider a complementary response to those CA's which elect to cooperate and meet the criteria such as (in order):

1. **General acceptance that the CA is the voice of its community.** Of course, this is too big an issue to be cast in stone and at any time elections or a referendum or professional surveys or other input may, or should, be required. It would be a statement of philosophy not law.
2. **The aforementioned quarterly joint meetings shall resume.**
3. **Council will consider assignment of Councillors to CA's as in the past.**

- 4. The DOS web site returns to the practice of making the Community Associations' web site easily available to the community with an easy link.**
- 5. Council will consider assisting with newsletter printing costs and any other reasonable CA costs.**