

Colin Plant: You Didn't Do the Work

He moved the policy, armed the bylaw, moved the notices and refused every owner who asked for relief. On 938 Ambassador Avenue, he asked nothing. Drawn from Saanich's own minutes, recordings and financial plans, with public biography, 2017 to 2026.

Disclosure

1. The author, Christopher Caddell, owns 938 Ambassador Avenue and is in active litigation with the District of Saanich. This report is separate from that litigation. It is an independent analysis produced with a search engine built for the litigation, which indexes every open Saanich Council meeting since September 2017 (495 meetings and 12.2 million transcribed words) together with the District's agendas, minutes and financial statements. Every statement of fact is tied to a public record listed at the end.

In his own words

What he said	What he did
"I'd like to see us have good policy and if that is that we need more complaints before we investigate, so be it." (July 9, 2018) [4]	Seconded the refusal to lift a notice produced by a file opened on one complaint (July 14, 2025) [4]
"I'm not comfortable exposing the municipality to any liability whether it's minute in possibility." (February 3, 2020) [6]	Moved ten Section 57 notices; never asked what the District's own enforcement exposes it to [6][9]
"I do not see a notice of title removal of \$500 as being an incredibly persecutory act." (October 18, 2021) [6]	Called a Fairburn Drive notice "essentially a \$500 removal charge" two minutes after the owner described a \$30,000 design fee (June 9, 2025) [6]
"It is going to cost the applicant or the owner... five hundred dollars and that's unfortunate, but... not prohibitive." (November 20, 2023) [6]	Seconded the confirmation of the notice on 938 Ambassador Avenue, where meeting the permit requirements alone costs a minimum of \$100,000 in consulting fees [16]
"I don't think I've ever had a more respectful presentation from someone appealing a notice on title." (November 20, 2023) [11]	Supported the notice on 4573 Prospect Lake Road in the same speech: "in the interests of protecting the interests of the district of Saanich from potential litigation this is really the only option" [11]
"If an applicant was unhappy with the adjudication done by staff they have the right to appeal to council. That's understandable and probably a good..." (February 24, 2025) [7]	Voted nine to nothing against the appeal on 938 Ambassador Avenue five months later [16]
"It puts the responsibility solely on the director without an appeal to council." (July 20, 2026) [7]	"I'm going to lend my support on it." Same speech [7]

2. Every one of those positions followed advice from the administration Brent Reems has led since 2017, first as Director of Building, Bylaw, Licensing and Legal Services and then as Chief Administrative Officer. If the advice was wrong, it was his. The votes were

Plant's.

Who he is

3. Colin Plant, 51 in 2024, is a Saanich councillor first elected in 2014 and re-elected in 2018 and 2022. He has been a secondary school teacher in Saanich School District 63 for 25 years, currently at Claremont Secondary, and holds three UVic degrees: theatre direction, secondary education and a master's in educational leadership. He grew up on a dairy farm in Central Saanich, attended Stelly's Secondary, and has lived in Saanich for more than three decades. He chaired the Capital Regional District board from November 2018, the longest tenure of any CRD chair, and was re-elected chair in November 2023. In April 2024 he won the federal NDP nomination in Saanich-Gulf Islands, recruited, by his campaign's account, by Jagmeet Singh. His campaign's first act was a news release describing the 69-year-old incumbent, Elizabeth May, as "challenged to keep up with riding duties" because of strokes. It was retracted within the hour and he apologised. He describes himself as a Chief Scout recipient and a 1994 Commonwealth Games mascot, and says he is running "because I enjoy serving the residents of Saanich." [1]

What the record shows

4. Over nine years Plant has been the most reliable vote on council for every expansion of Saanich's enforcement machinery, and the most frequent mover of the notices it registers on residents' titles. His stated reason, repeated on the record for six years, is liability. His conduct on the same record shows a councillor who asks the liability question of owners and never of the administration, who identifies defects in what he is voting for and votes for it anyway, and who, when he holds the chair, uses procedure to silence residents.

He supplied the argument for the expansion, and was told it would not pay

5. 28 February 2019, budget committee, Plant to Director Reems: "What is our ratio compared to similar municipalities?" Reems: Victoria one officer per 12,000, Langford and Kelowna one per 8,500, Saanich one per 28,000, "between nine and ten instead of the three." Plant: "some incredibly large caseloads for our bylaw enforcement officers." Then: "Should council look at the addition of a bylaw enforcement officer as potentially funded through the additional fines and tickets that they would write?" Reems: 2018 ticket revenue "was around twenty thousand dollars. So that revenue is not going to make up hiring an additional staff person."
6. Two years later Report 1970-20 sold three officers on \$120,000 a year in tickets and cited the comparator ratios Plant had asked for. He voted for it. The service has never reported a ticket count to council. It cost \$644,700 in 2020 and \$1.6 million in 2025 [2].

He moved the 2018 policy that dropped the safeguards, after asking about them

7. 17 September 2018. Plant asked Reems whether the absence of public conduct standards for enforcement staff "has that been a problem, or is it just best practice?" Reems: "No, it

hasn't been a problem... the way we're planning to address it is to put some information on the website." Plant: "I personally haven't had any complaints brought to my attention." He then asked about giving enforcement "a bit more tooth" by "levying a fine without it being such a laborious process," and moved adoption of the policy. The website standards were never published. The policy contains no inspection rules and no appeal [3].

He set the threshold that was later ignored

8. 9 July 2018, opposing an interim relaxation of suite enforcement: "I'd like to see us have good policy and if that is that we need more complaints before we investigate, so be it." The policy he moved two months later requires two written complaints from separate dwellings within 100 metres by non-occupants before a suite is investigated. The 938 Ambassador Avenue file was opened on one complaint from a former occupant. In July 2025 Plant seconded the motion refusing to lift the notice it produced [4].

He asked the right question about Bylaw 9694 and moved it on a wrong answer

9. 3 May 2021. Plant: "Is it accurate Mr. Reems that all of these housekeeping bylaw amendments are simply as a result of the split of the two positions and that there are actually no consequential changes to the actual bylaws themselves?" Reems: "Yes that's correct... very minor and largely due to grammar." Bylaw 9694 extended the Zoning Bylaw's occupancy inspection and entry authority from one certified building official to the bylaw department and every enforcement officer in it. Plant moved all three readings, seconded the waiver of the public hearing four weeks later, and moved the adoption on 21 June 2021. He did not ask for the text [5].

Owners penalized for liability, never the administration

Date	His words, chair-named	Matter	Result
3 Feb 2020	"I'm not comfortable exposing the municipality to any liability whether it's minute in possibility."	First s. 57 notice of the series, 3901 Ansell Road. Moved it.	Carried
28 Sep 2020	"Can you please remind Council what the liability would be if the title was taken off of this property?"	Owner's application to cancel, 1299 Camrose Crescent.	Refused
10 Jan 2022	"What would be the harm or liability to the district if we were to put this notice on title in abeyance for a certain period of time?"	4029 Glanford Avenue.	Carried
4 Jul 2022	"Nothing in the appeal made me feel that council had made the wrong decision... we have to rely on the systems that we have in place."	Bains appeal, 5390 Old West Saanich Road, on a notice the owner never received. Moved to reaffirm.	Reaffirmed

Date	His words, chair-named	Matter	Result
20 Nov 2023	"In the interests of protecting the interests of the District of Saanich from potential litigation this is really the only option."	4573 Prospect Lake Road, the same night 938 Ambassador Avenue was encumbered.	Carried
14 Jul 2025	Seconded the refusal of the 938 Ambassador cancellation request. Asked no question.	938 Ambassador Avenue.	9 to 0

10. In six years of asking what the District would be exposed to if it lifted a notice, he has not once asked what the District is exposed to by the department that imposes them. That exposure now includes more than \$571,000 billed by outside prosecution counsel on one file that produced six acquittals, a BC Supreme Court finding that the Manager of Inspection Services' methodology was "conclusory and without an evidentiary foundation," an open provincial Registrar file on unqualified officers making Building Code decisions, and civil, human rights and tribunal proceedings. None of it appears in the financial plans he seconds every March [6].

He names the defect and votes for it

11. 24 February 2025: "If an applicant was unhappy with the adjudication done by staff they have the right to appeal to council. That's understandable and probably a good..." Five months later, 9 to 0 against an appeal. 20 July 2026, Plant to Reems: "What appeal process, if any, will exist if there is a disagreement on how the director calculates..." Reems: the bylaw "doesn't provide for an appeal mechanism to mayor and council"; the appeal "is really to court." Plant: "It puts the responsibility solely on the director without an appeal to council... when we delegate a decision-making process to staff that we should have..." Then: "I'm going to lend my support on it." [7]

In the chair, he silences residents

12. The minutes record Plant in the chair at sixteen meetings. Open forum on 6 May 2024 is the one to read. It is the fifteen minutes a month when, by the District's own script, "the intent is for council to listen to residents' comments," and the script also lists what residents may not raise: bylaw enforcement, legal matters, in-camera matters, board of variance, remedial orders, development applications, and anything touching a public hearing.
13. Sasha Isard had spoken for fourteen seconds, asking why Saanich would hold a referendum on amalgamation but not on whether local area plans should remain binding, when Plant stopped the clock on a point of order from Councillor Phelps Bondaroff. Plant ruled that anything on the public hearing's "metaphorical docket" could not be raised. Isard asked what he could talk about that was not in the OCP. Plant: "That is for you to determine." Isard: "Given the fact that the OCP pretty much covers everything, I have nothing to say because the public has been gagged. This is not a democracy."

14. Mehdi Najari came next, asking why the District paid \$25 million for three Lochside Drive properties assessed at \$11.1 million, and then how the public had been told of the OCP hearing. Plant: "please pause Mr. Najari's clock. I take no pleasure in doing this, but I cannot have you speak about something that is related to the public hearing. Even the process of how the public hearing was led to be called is subject to the material that I think is not to be commented upon." Najari: "The public were saying that they were not aware of it." Plant: "I'm going to ask you to pause again and we'll pause your clock."
15. Two residents, two subjects, both stopped inside a minute, at the one forum that exists for residents to speak. The rule he enforced is the District's; the ruling that a question about how residents were notified of a hearing is itself part of the hearing was his [8].

Reems at his elbow

16. At each turn in the enforcement story, Councillor Plant voted after Brent Reems told Council what it needed to hear.
17. September 17, 2018: Reems told him the absence of public conduct standards for enforcement staff "hasn't been a problem" and would be addressed on the website. Plant moved the policy. The standards were never published [3].
18. February 28, 2019: Plant asked Reems for the officer-to-population ratios. Reems supplied them. Two years later Plant voted for Report 1970-20, which cited the same ratios to add three officers [2].
19. May 3, 2021: Plant asked Reems whether the housekeeping amendments made any consequential changes. Reems answered "Yes that's correct... very minor and largely due to grammar." Plant moved Bylaw 9694, which extended entry authority to enforcement officers [5].
20. July 4, 2022: Harry Bains had just told Council that finishing his work would cost \$300,000. Reems told Council the notice "is meant to incent following our process... and it gets removed for a small administrative fee." Seconds later Plant moved to reaffirm the notice, telling Council "for \$500, this notice on title will be able to be taken away" [20][6].
21. July 14, 2025: before the vote on 938 Ambassador Avenue, Reems told Council the search "was lawfully conducted" and that he "certainly did not hear any specific details" of the injury. Plant seconded the confirmation of the notice [10].
22. July 20, 2026: Reems told Plant the bylaw "doesn't provide for an appeal mechanism to mayor and council" and that the appeal "is really to court." Plant called that a defect, then said "I'm going to lend my support on it" [7].

The coded language

23. Staff give Council keywords instead of facts, and Council votes on them. The record shows the pattern [12]:

What staff told Council	What the record shows
Notice will "reduce Saanich's liability exposure" (report, October 31, 2023); removing it "may expose the District to liability" (July 14, 2025)	No legal opinion, claim, or dollar figure for that liability was ever put to Council
"Without a notice on title, there is potential liability to the District"; omitting one "could expose the municipality to liability" (Fairburn, Conway, Quadra, June 9, 2025)	The same liability line for three different properties, with nothing said about what the liability is or who would claim it
A notice "is meant to incent following our process... and it gets removed for a small administrative fee." (Chief Administrative Officer Brent Reems, July 4, 2022, 5390 Old West Saanich Road) [20]	Minutes earlier, the Manager of Inspection Services told Council removal takes a building permit, plans, a completed project and a final inspection, and the owner told Council finishing would cost \$300,000. Council reaffirmed the notice unanimously [20]
"Internal GIS data shows that structures were added over time" (July 14, 2025)	Imagery, not inspection or records, used to date construction
Contraventions "affecting life and safety" (Corporate Officer, June 23, 2025)	No life or safety finding about 938 Ambassador Avenue was put to Council that night or on July 14, 2025
The stairs "are a safety risk" and fail "previous versions of the Code" (4573 Prospect Lake Road, November 20, 2023)	The Manager could not date the stair, and the owner's inspector and, the owner said, the District's own inspector found it acceptable
"Unable to assess the safety or quality of the building... raising concerns about potential health and safety issues" (Fairburn, June 9, 2025)	A concern stated as a reason, with no assessment behind it
The search "was lawfully conducted" (Chief Administrative Officer, July 14, 2025)	Its validity was then before the Provincial Court

24. The \$500 is the clearest case. Staff know what removal requires: on July 4, 2022 the Manager of Inspection Services listed it for Council as a building permit, plans, a completed project and a final inspection, and the owner told Council the work would cost \$300,000 [20]. Minutes later Brent Reems called it "a small administrative fee" [20]. On November 20, 2023 the Manager told Council there were "no financial implications" and a "\$500 fee" to remove the notice on 938 Ambassador Avenue [19]. On July 14, 2025 staff confirmed to Council that removal costs \$500 [15]. Each time, staff stated the fee and left out the cost.

25. Councillor Plant voted on every line above. He moved the Fairburn, Conway and Quadra notices on June 9, 2025, supported the Prospect Lake notice, and seconded the confirmation on 938 Ambassador Avenue. Each time, the keyword came from the administration Brent Reems leads; the vote came from Plant [9][11][12].

Facilitating the hostage loop

26. The District investigates the owner, enforces against him, can prosecute him, registers the encumbrance on his title, and then decides, at the same Council table and on the advice of the same staff, whether it comes off. The only key is compliance as the District defines it: the owner is unlawfully forced to open his private dwelling to the same bylaw officers who built the case against him, pays for permits, consultants and whatever remedial work they then order, and pays the District \$500 at the end. Until he does, the notice stays on title and the sale of his home is affected. The only appeal from Council's refusal is to court, at his expense.
27. Creation. The October 31, 2023 report recommended the notice because it "will reduce Saanich's liability exposure on this file" [13].
28. The key. Council was told the notice comes off for a \$500 fee once the property is brought into compliance with all regulations [13][19], and on July 14, 2025 that the fee is collected "when all the conditions have been met" [15]. The \$500 is only the District's registration fee. The cost of a Section 57 notice is hundreds of thousands of dollars. For this house, the title ransom starts at \$100,000 in consulting fees for the building permit alone, with remedial work ordered inside the dwelling up to \$250,000. It is paid on top of the District's fines and on top of double permit fees, which the owner of 4573 Prospect Lake Road told Council he paid [21]. It is paid to the satisfaction of inspectors whose approval can be taken back: he told Council the District's own inspector approved his stairs on February 23, 2023 before the Manager of Inspection Services overruled him [21]. A home renovation becomes an offence, and the owner is penalized twice: Harry Bains was fined and sent to collections, the owner of 4573 Prospect Lake Road paid his fines through the courts, and the owner of 938 Ambassador Avenue was prosecuted.
29. Who holds the key. Since Bylaw No. 9694 (2021), occupancy inspection and entry authority under the Zoning Bylaw extends to bylaw enforcement officers, not only building officials [18]. The October 31, 2023 report told Council the violation was confirmed "by the Bylaw Officer" [13]. A bylaw enforcement officer is not a building official under the Building Act.
30. The pressure. While the notice stands, the owner is penalized with the loss of the ordinary ability to sell, finance and insure his home. Counsel told Council on July 14, 2025 that the notice was affecting the sale of 938 Ambassador Avenue [16]. Harry Bains told Council on July 4, 2022 that his sale collapsed when his realtor warned him of a non-disclosure suit [20].
31. The review. Cancellation under section 58 is decided by the Council that imposed the notice, on staff advice. On June 23, 2025 the Corporate Officer told Council that staff recommended against removal because the contraventions "impact life and safety on the property" [14]. On July 14, 2025, when Councillor Chambers asked whether the owner could be given more time, staff answered that "the opportunity is tonight" [15]. Council

confirmed the notice nine to nothing [16].

32. Two other owners were victimized by the same hostage loop. In 2022 Council registered a notice on 5390 Old West Saanich Road at a meeting the owner, Harry Bains, had not been notified of. He told Council on July 4, 2022 that he learned of it from the front page of the Saanich News, that his sale collapsed when his realtor warned him of a non-disclosure suit, that business licence and bylaw inspectors had fined him and sent him to collections, and that finishing the work would cost \$300,000. He asked whether he should bring someone to speak for him because he did not know where to begin. Staff told Council the key was a building permit, engineered plans, structural engineering, a completed project and a final inspection. Council reaffirmed the notice unanimously [20].
33. In 2023 the owner of 4573 Prospect Lake Road told Council he had paid his fines, gone to court, paid double permit fees, hired a designer, a geotechnical firm and two engineers, and met the District's inspector "every day." He told Council that inspector approved his stairs on February 23, 2023, that the Manager of Inspection Services overruled him, and that a retired inspector he hired found the stairs safe. The stair was existing and outside the scope of his work: he told Council it was in the house when he bought it in 2016 and was not part of his renovations, and Councillor Harper restated that on the record. The Manager of Inspection Services told Council the owner's building permit was still open and valid for two years, and that the stair could be corrected under it, and recommended the notice anyway. He told Council there is no correction for such a stair short of replacing it entirely. Councillor Harper told Council that other mechanisms, including letters on the property file, had been used in the past instead of a notice. Council registered the notice, with only Councillor Harper opposed [21].
34. Plant built more of the loop than any other member of council. He moved the 2018 policy whose two-complaint threshold for suites the 938 Ambassador file did not meet [3][4]. He moved Bylaw 9694, which extended occupancy inspection and entry authority to enforcement officers [5]. Of the twenty Section 57 notices whose registration is recorded in the minutes from 2020 to 2025, he moved ten: 3901 Ansell Road and 1299 Camrose Crescent (February 3, 2020); 389 Obed Avenue and 4037 Lakehill Place (October 18, 2021); 3979 Locarno Lane (November 1, 2021); 1206 Judge Place and 5390 Old West Saanich Road (May 30, 2022); and 1845 Fairburn Drive, 323 Conway Road and 4029 Quadra Street (June 9, 2025). No other member moved more than three. He also moved the reaffirmation of 5390 Old West Saanich Road (July 4, 2022) and seconded the confirmation of 938 Ambassador Avenue (July 14, 2025) [9].
35. He has refused every owner who asked for the key. On 4 July 2022, three minutes after staff told council that removal requires a permit, engineered plans, completed work and a final inspection, he told council that "for \$500 this notice on title will be able to be taken away" and moved to reaffirm the notice [6]. The cost of a Section 57 notice is hundreds of thousands of dollars, not \$500. His statement described the fee for the key and omitted

the title ransom: a minimum of \$100,000 in consulting fees to satisfy a building permit, and remedial work that could reach \$250,000.

36. On July 14, 2025, seconding the confirmation of the notice on 938 Ambassador Avenue, he said: "I will almost always when the district is put into a position of potentially being held liable" act "to try and indemnify the municipality from future risk," and that he was "confident in the processes Saanich has" [15]. He asked no question about the evidence, the single complaint or the owner's notice of counsel [16].

Summary

37. Plant did not design Saanich's enforcement model. He asked for the numbers that justified it, moved the policy that stripped its safeguards, moved the bylaw that armed it, seconded the motion that kept the public out of the room, moved ten of the twenty notices recorded in the minutes, refused all three owners who asked for relief, and, in the chair, stopped residents' clocks. He has said on the record that the missing safeguards were probably good, that the missing appeal was a defect, and that residents should be heard. He voted against each of those positions the same day or within months. His word for all of it is liability. The record's word is the one he has never applied to himself.

Sources

- [1] Island Social Trends, 24 April 2024; Times Colonist, 30 April 2024 and 5 October 2022; Saanich News, 14 November 2018; saanich.ca council profile.
- [2] Recording 2019-02-28, 2:05:22 to 2:08:40, Plant named by the chair. Report 1970-20, pp. 10 to 12. Financial Plans 2021 to 2026.
- [3] Recording 2018-09-17, 3:44:36 to 3:48:30. Minutes 17 September 2018. Reports of B. Reems, 16 May and 7 September 2018.
- [4] Recording 2018-07-09, 2:53:13. Bylaw Enforcement Policy 2018, ss. 1.3 and 1.7. Recording 14-JUL-2025, approx. 4311 to 4420 s.
- [5] Recording 2021-05-03_clip535, 1:19:14 to 1:19:40. Minutes 3 May, 31 May and 21 June 2021. Zoning Bylaw s. 11.2 before and after 9694.
- [6] Recordings and minutes of 3 February 2020, 28 September 2020, 18 October 2021, 10 January 2022, 4 July 2022, 20 November 2023, 9 June 2025 and 14 July 2025; Kinney v. Saanich, 2025 BCSC 1132.
- [7] Recordings 2025-02-24_clip998, 0:59:04; 2026-07-20_clip1334, 1:41:53 to 1:45:10.
- [8] Recording 2024-05-06_clip872, 0:03:00 to 0:09:30. Minutes 6 May 2024, Plant in the chair.
- [9] Council minutes, 3 February 2020, 18 October 2021, 1 November 2021, 30 May 2022, 4 July 2022, 9 June 2025 and 14 July 2025.
- [10] Council meeting video transcript, July 14, 2025 (approx. 3995 to 4080 s).
- [11] Council meeting video transcript, November 20, 2023, 4573 Prospect Lake Road (approx. 1865 to 3320 s).
- [12] Council minutes: July 4, 2022 (5390 Old West Saanich Road); November 20, 2023 (938 Ambassador Avenue and 4573 Prospect Lake Road); June 9, 2025 (1845 Fairburn Drive, 323 Conway Road, 4029 Quadra Street); June 23, 2025 and July 14, 2025 (938 Ambassador Avenue); statements of the Manager of Inspection Services, the Corporate Officer and the Chief Administrative Officer as recorded.

- [13] District of Saanich, Report to Council, Notice on Title - 938 Ambassador Avenue, October 31, 2023 (A. Bains; prepared by the Manager of Inspection Services; endorsed by the CAO).
- [14] Council meeting video transcript, June 23, 2025 (approx. 1053 to 1140 s).
- [15] Council meeting video transcript, July 14, 2025 (approx. 4075 to 4080 s, 4186 to 4200 s and 4311 to 4470 s).
- [16] Council minutes, July 14, 2025, Request to Cancel Notice on Title, 938 Ambassador Avenue.
- [17] Council minutes, June 9, 2025, 1845 Fairburn Drive, Recommendation of Notice on Title.
- [18] Council minutes, May 3, 2021 and June 21, 2021, Bylaw No. 9694; Report of B. Reems, Housekeeping Bylaw Amendments, May 7, 2021.
- [19] Council meeting video transcript, November 20, 2023 (approx. 171 to 310 s).
- [20] Council meeting video transcript and minutes, July 4, 2022, 5390 Old West Saanich Road (approx. 1150 to 3115 s).
- [21] Council meeting video transcript, November 20, 2023, 4573 Prospect Lake Road (approx. 1700 to 3320 s); Council minutes, November 20, 2023, pp. 2 to 3.