

Judy Brownoff: Your Ignorance Is a Choice

She voted against even a staff report on the housing residents asked for. She answered an owner's evidence with a hypothetical. She put a notice on a home because it was up for sale. Drawn from her statements to voters and Saanich's own minutes and meeting recordings.

What the record shows

1. The record shows a councillor who chooses not to know. When ten residents asked for garden suites outside the Urban Containment Boundary, she voted against even asking staff for a report [9]. When owners came to Council with permits, plans, paid fines and requests for time, she moved or voted for the notice anyway [6][7]. She has never brought a motion asking what a Section 57 notice costs an owner or how one is removed [11].
2. What she would not hear from residents, she accepted from staff without question. She voted with the unanimous Council after Brent Reems called removal of a notice "a small administrative fee," minutes after the owner said finishing would cost \$300,000 [29]. She turned the Manager of Inspection Services' "safety risk" into a hypothetical elderly person on a stair [7].
3. She runs on age-friendly neighbourhoods, housing that is "affordable, accessible, and sustainable," engaging "with all areas of the community" and "transparent governance" [1][2][3][4]. She voted against adding a lobbyist registry to the strategic plan [10].

In her own words

What she said	What she did
"I am an experienced and approachable politician that believes to get better decisions you engage with all areas of the community." [3]	Moved the notice on 4029 Glanford Avenue after the owner asked for time: "when a stop work order is placed on a property that's exactly what it means" (January 10, 2022) [6]
Housing "that is affordable, accessible, and sustainable." (2022) [1][2]	Moved three Section 57 notices on residents' homes in one night (January 10, 2022) [6]
"Creating Age-Friendly and Livable neighbourhoods"; "Saanich's older-adult population is growing, we need more appropriate older-adult housing." (2022) [1][2]	Seconded the request to the Province to let Saanich refuse secondary and garden suites outside the Urban Containment Boundary (May 13, 2024), and voted against a staff report on garden suites after residents asked for them for multi-generational living (June 24, 2024) [8][9]
"If you had an elderly person trying to go up those stairs... I'm sitting here thinking a little elevator." (November 20, 2023) [7]	Voted for the notice on a stair the owner said predated his purchase and was outside his work [7]
"I think this is prudent to put this on title since the property is up for sale." (January 10, 2022) [6]	Moved the notice on 1090 Lodge Avenue [6]

What she said	What she did
"Transparent governance." (2026) [4]	Voted against adding a lobbyist registry to the strategic plan (May 12, 2025) [10]

4. Each of those votes followed advice from the administration led by Chief Administrative Officer Brent Reems. If the advice was wrong, it was his. The votes were hers.

Her words to the press

What she told reporters	What the record shows
"We're doing everything asked of us." (CBC, June 2024, on rural secondary suites) [16]	She voted against allowing secondary suites outside the Urban Containment Boundary, a bylaw staff said would let 2,442 properties add a suite. It passed seven to two [16][17]. The same night she voted against even a staff report on garden suites [9]
"Saanich can approve as many applications as we want, but it doesn't translate into a developer getting a building permit or even starting a building"; council "has been doing what it can." (Times Colonist, March 2026, asking the Province to scrap Saanich's housing targets) [18]	She had moved three notices on residents' homes, seconded the request to refuse suites outside the boundary, and voted against rural suites and a garden suites report. Her motion to scrap the targets was defeated [6][8][9][19]
"More opportunity for intergenerational housing." (2026 candidate survey) [20]	Voted against a garden suites report after residents asked for them for multi-generational living (June 24, 2024) [9]
"Our staff are working in substandard conditions... Heaven help you if you're over six feet." (Capital Daily, January 2026, on borrowing \$93.4 million for a new operations centre) [21]	In the record searched she has never asked what a Section 57 notice costs the owner who carries it [11]

What she was told, and set aside

Date and property	What Council heard first	What she did
Jan 10, 2022, 4029 Glanford Avenue	The owner said a plumbing permit was in place, the work was underway when he bought the house, a contractor was drawing plans, and asked for time	Moved the notice
Jan 10, 2022, 960 Lakeview Avenue	No one appeared for the owner. She noted the effect the notice could have on the neighbouring strata lot's property values	Moved the notice
Jan 10, 2022, 1090 Lodge Avenue	The property was up for sale	Moved the notice as "prudent" for that reason
Jul 4, 2022, 5390 Old West Saanich Road	Harry Bains said he had not been told of the meeting, his sale had collapsed, he had been fined and sent to collections, and finishing would cost \$300,000	Voted with the unanimous Council to reaffirm

Date and property	What Council heard first	What she did
Nov 20, 2023, 4573 Prospect Lake Road	The owner said he had paid his fines, gone to court, paid double permit fees, hired engineers, and that the stair predated his purchase	Voted for the notice; offered "a little elevator"
Jun 24, 2024, garden suites outside the Urban Containment Boundary	Ten residents asked for garden suites, citing mortgage help, multi-generational living and farm workers	Voted against even a staff report
Jun 9, 2025, 1845 Fairburn Drive	The owner said he had paid a designer \$10,000 of a \$30,000 fee	Voted for the notice
Jul 14, 2025, 938 Ambassador Avenue	Counsel said the District had been told in April 2023 to deal with the owner through his lawyer, and that the notice was affecting the sale	Voted to confirm

What she accepted without question

5. July 4, 2022: Reems told Council the notice "is meant to incent following our process... and it gets removed for a small administrative fee." She voted with the unanimous Council to reaffirm [29]. November 20, 2023: she voted for the notice on 938 Ambassador Avenue on a report endorsed by Reems, with no one present for the owner; it carried without opposition [12][22]. July 14, 2025: Reems told Council the search "was lawfully conducted" and that he "certainly did not hear any specific details" of the injury; she voted to confirm the notice, nine to nothing [13][25].
6. Staff give Council keywords instead of facts, and Council votes on them [14]:

What staff told Council	What the record shows
The notice will "reduce Saanich's liability exposure" (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" (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" (Reems, July 4, 2022)	Minutes earlier Council was told removal takes a building permit, plans, a completed project and a final inspection, and the owner said the work would cost \$300,000 [29]
The stairs "are a safety risk" and fail "previous versions of the Code" (Prospect Lake, November 20, 2023)	The Manager could not date the stair; the owner's inspector and, the owner said, the District's own inspector found it acceptable
Contraventions "affecting life and safety" (June 23, 2025)	No life or safety finding about 938 Ambassador Avenue was put to Council that night or on July 14, 2025
The search "was lawfully conducted" (Reems, July 14, 2025)	Its validity was then before the Provincial Court

7. The \$500 is the clearest case. On November 20, 2023 the Manager of Inspection Services told Council there were "no financial implications" and a "\$500 fee" to remove the notice on 938 Ambassador Avenue [28]. On July 14, 2025 staff confirmed removal costs \$500 [24]. Each time, staff stated the fee and left out the cost. She voted on every line above. The keywords came from the administration Brent Reems leads; the votes were hers.

The hostage loop

8. 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.
9. Creation. The October 31, 2023 report recommended the notice because it "will reduce Saanich's liability exposure on this file" [22].
10. The key. Council was told the notice comes off for a \$500 fee once the property is brought into compliance with all regulations [22][28], and on July 14, 2025 that the fee is collected "when all the conditions have been met" [24]. 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 [30]. 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.
11. 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 [27]. The October 31, 2023 report told Council the violation was confirmed "by the Bylaw Officer" [22]. A bylaw enforcement officer is not a building official under the Building Act.
12. 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 [25].
13. 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" [23]. On July 14, 2025, when Councillor Chambers asked whether the owner could be given more time, Brent Reems answered that "the opportunity is tonight" [24]. Council confirmed the notice nine to nothing [25].

14. 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 [29].
15. 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 [30].
16. Her three, all moved on January 10, 2022: 1090 Lodge Avenue, 4029 Glanford Avenue and 960 Lakeview Avenue. Councillor Brice seconded all three [6][11].

What she brought to the table

17. She moved the three readings of the Tenant Protection Bylaw on October 27, 2025 [15]. She seconded Councillor Brice's May 13, 2024 motion asking the Province for an exemption from allowing secondary and garden suites outside the Urban Containment Boundary [8]. She voted for all seven Section 57 notices registered this term [11]. In the record searched she has brought no motion on bylaw enforcement, complaint handling, or how an owner gets a Section 57 notice removed [11].

Background

18. She has lived in Saanich since 1987 and owned and operated two businesses for 20 years [1]. She was first elected to Saanich Council in 1993 and has been re-elected at every

election since. She serves as a Capital Regional District director, has chaired the CRD Parks Committee, and is a past chair of the CRD board, the Capital Regional Hospital District, the Victoria Regional Transit Commission and the BC Healthy Communities Board [3][5]. She is seeking re-election in 2026 [4].

About this review

19. 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.

Sources

- [1] Times Colonist, "Judy Brownoff - Saanich council candidate 2022" (October 2022).
- [2] District of Saanich, 2022 General Local Election Candidate Profile Guide.
- [3] Times Colonist, candidate profile, "Judy Brownoff" (archive).
- [4] Victoria Buzz, "Local election guide: Saanich candidates for mayor and council" (September 2026); District of Saanich, 2026 Candidate Profile Guide.
- [5] District of Saanich, Meet Your Council, Judy Brownoff (saanich.ca), accessed October 5, 2026.
- [6] Council minutes and meeting video transcript, January 10, 2022 (approx. 3464 to 4800 s): 4029 Glanford Avenue, 960 Lakeview Avenue and 1090 Lodge Avenue.
- [7] Council meeting video transcript, November 20, 2023, 4573 Prospect Lake Road (approx. 1700 to 3320 s; Councillor Brownoff called by the chair at 3174 s); Council minutes, November 20, 2023, pp. 2 to 3.
- [8] Council minutes, May 13, 2024, Secondary and Garden Suites Outside the Urban Containment Boundary.
- [9] Council minutes, June 24, 2024, Public Input and Secondary Suites Outside the Urban Containment Boundary, pp. 6 to 14.
- [10] Council minutes, May 12, 2025, Strategic Plan, Lobby Register.
- [11] District of Saanich Council, Committee of the Whole, Special Council and Public Hearing minutes, 2017 to July 13, 2026, as held in the minutes archive.
- [12] Council minutes, November 20, 2023, 938 Ambassador Avenue.
- [13] Council meeting video transcript, July 14, 2025 (approx. 3380 to 3405 s and 3995 to 4080 s).
- [14] Council minutes: July 4, 2022; November 20, 2023; June 9, 2025 (1845 Fairburn Drive, 323 Conway Road, 4029 Quadra Street); June 23 and July 14, 2025; statements of the Manager of Inspection Services, the Corporate Officer and the Chief Administrative Officer as recorded.
- [15] Council minutes, October 27, 2025, Tenant Protection Bylaw, Readings.
- [16] CBC News, "Saanich votes to allow secondary suites in rural areas" (June 2024).
- [17] Times Colonist, "Saanich council votes to allow secondary suites in rural areas" (June 2024).
- [18] Times Colonist, "Saanich councillors want province to scrap housing targets" (March 2026).
- [19] Victoria Buzz, "Two Saanich council members push to scrap provincial housing targets" (March 2026); Times Colonist, "Saanich sends motion on housing targets back to drawing board" (March 2026).

- [20] Livable CRD candidate scorecard, Judy Brownoff, Saanich 2026 (livablecrd.ca).
- [21] Capital Daily, "Saanich council votes to borrow \$93.4M for new operation centre" (January 2026).
- [22] 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).
- [23] Council meeting video transcript, June 23, 2025 (approx. 1053 to 1140 s).
- [24] Council meeting video transcript, July 14, 2025 (approx. 4075 to 4080 s, 4186 to 4200 s and 4311 to 4470 s).
- [25] Council minutes, July 14, 2025, Request to Cancel Notice on Title, 938 Ambassador Avenue.
- [26] Council minutes, June 9, 2025, 1845 Fairburn Drive, Recommendation of Notice on Title.
- [27] Council minutes, May 3, 2021 and June 21, 2021, Bylaw No. 9694; Report of B. Reems, Housekeeping Bylaw Amendments, May 7, 2021.
- [28] Council meeting video transcript, November 20, 2023 (approx. 171 to 310 s).
- [29] Council meeting video transcript and minutes, July 4, 2022, 5390 Old West Saanich Road (approx. 1150 to 3115 s).
- [30] 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.