

Nathalie Chambers: You Claim Civic Engagement, Until Residents Engage

Ten residents asked Council for garden suites; she voted against even a staff report. Owners came to Council to be heard; she seconded the notices. Drawn from her statements to voters and Saanich's own minutes and meeting recordings.

What the record shows

1. Councillor Nathalie Chambers claims civic engagement. When residents engage, she votes the other way. On June 24, 2024 ten residents came to Council to ask for garden suites outside the Urban Containment Boundary; she voted against even asking staff for a report [8]. Owners and tenants who came to Council to be heard on Section 57 notices found her moving or seconding the notice [5][6][20].
2. She runs on public participation, strong civic engagement and "an independent voice, so I can always put Saanich citizens first" [1][2]. In January 2024 she brought the only notice of motion this term on the complaint-driven bylaw system. On February 5, 2024, after the Chief Administrative Officer said his preference was to refer the topic, she seconded the motion to table her own motion indefinitely [3].
3. She has moved or seconded seven of the twenty Section 57 notices recorded since 2020 [5]. On July 4, 2022 she seconded the motion to keep the notice on 5390 Old West Saanich Road, minutes after Brent Reems told Council the notice "gets removed for a small administrative fee" and the owner told Council the work would cost \$300,000 [20]. On February 3, 2020 she explained her vote for a notice in staff's words: it "will reduce any of Saanich's liability and exposure of this file" [6].
4. The same night she also voted against allowing secondary suites outside the Urban Containment Boundary; the bylaw passed seven to two [7]. She voted to register and then to confirm the notice on 938 Ambassador Avenue [9][16].

In her own words

What she said	What she did
"I have listened and learned our community supports strong civic engagement." (2022) [1]	Voted against a staff report on garden suites after ten residents spoke for them (June 24, 2024) [8]
"On council, I've maintained an independent voice, so I can always put Saanich citizens first." (2022) [1]	Explained her vote for a notice in the words of the staff report: it "will reduce any of Saanich's liability and exposure of this file" (February 3, 2020) [6]
Asked staff to review "the integrity and confidentiality of the complaint driven bylaw system." (notice of motion, January 2024) [3]	Seconded the motion to table it indefinitely and refer bylaw enforcement to strategic planning (February 5, 2024) [3]
"I do like the idea of not rewarding people who break the rules." (November 1, 2021) [10]	Seconded the notice on 3979 Locarno Lane [10]

What she said	What she did
Public participation as a 2026 priority [2]	Seconded the reaffirmation of the notice on 5390 Old West Saanich Road after the owner said he had not been told of the meeting that registered it (July 4, 2022) [20]

5. 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.

Residents who engaged

Date and property	What Council heard	Her role
Feb 3, 2020, 5435 Kiowa Road	The tenant said contractors had advised that permits were not required for temporary buildings	Moved the notice
Sep 28, 2020, 1299 Camrose Crescent	The owner appealed for the notice to be cancelled	Seconded the refusal
Nov 1, 2021, 3979 Locarno Lane	Council postponed the notice two weeks earlier to read the owner's correspondence	Seconded the notice
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	Seconded the reaffirmation
Jun 24, 2024, suites outside the Urban Containment Boundary	Ten residents asked for garden suites, citing mortgage help, multi-generational living and farm workers	Voted against rural secondary suites and against a garden suites report
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

The motion she tabled

6. Her notice of motion asked staff to review measures to keep the complaint-driven bylaw system's integrity and confidentiality intact as enforcement was shared with the Capital Regional District and provincial and federal agencies. Councillor Harper seconded it [3].
7. Reems told Council his "preference would be to refer the topic." Councillor de Vries moved that the motion "be tabled indefinitely and the issue of bylaw enforcement be referred to the Strategic Planning process." Councillor Chambers seconded. The referral carried [3]. The minutes from February 2024 to July 2026 record no report back on the complaint-driven system and no further motion from her on it [5].

The coded language

8. Staff give Council keywords instead of facts, and Council votes on them [11]:

What staff told Council	What the record shows
The notice will "reduce Saanich's liability exposure" (staff reports, 2020 to 2023)	No legal opinion, claim or dollar figure for that liability was ever put to Council. She repeated the phrase as her own reason in 2020 [6]
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 [20]
"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. She seconded Quadra [5]
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

9. 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 [19]. On July 14, 2025 staff confirmed removal costs \$500 [15]. Each time, staff stated the fee and left out the cost. The keywords came from the administration Brent Reems leads; the votes were hers.

The hostage loop

10. 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.
11. Creation. The October 31, 2023 report recommended the notice because it "will reduce Saanich's liability exposure on this file" [13].
12. 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]. 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.

13. 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.
14. 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].
15. 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, Brent Reems answered that "the opportunity is tonight" [15]. Council confirmed the notice nine to nothing [16].
16. 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].
17. 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].

18. Her seven: as mover, 5435 Kiowa Road, 588 Whiteside Street (2020) and 1396 Mount Douglas Cross Road (2021); as seconder, 1299 Camrose Crescent (2020), 389 Obed Avenue and 3979 Locarno Lane (2021) and 4029 Quadra Street (2025) [5].

What she brought to the table

19. She moved to add a lobbyist registry to the strategic plan on May 12, 2025. It failed one to seven, with only her in favour [12]. Her January 2024 motion on the complaint-driven bylaw system was the only one of its kind this term, and she seconded its tabling [3].

Background

20. She and her family lease and operate Madrona Farm in the Blenkinsop Valley [1]. She was first elected to Saanich Council in 2018 and received 10,633 votes in 2022 [1][4]. She is seeking a third term and a seat on the Capital Regional District board in 2026 [2][4]. On February 3, 2020 she told Council she owns and rents out a heritage home on Bethune Avenue [6].

About this review

21. 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, "Nathalie Chambers - Saanich council candidate 2022".
[2] nathaliechambers.ca (2026 campaign) and District of Saanich, 2026 Candidate Profile Guide.
[3] Council minutes, February 5, 2024, Shared Bylaw Enforcement (Notice of Motion of Councillor Chambers); Council meeting video transcript, February 5, 2024 (clip 832, approx. 9887 to 10420 s).
[4] CHEK News, "Election 2026: Saanich mayor and council candidates" (September 2026).
[5] District of Saanich Council minutes, 2017 to July 13, 2026, as held in the minutes archive.
[6] Council meeting video transcript, February 3, 2020 (approx. 1283 s, 2157 s and 10060 s); Council minutes, February 3, 2020.
[7] CBC News and Times Colonist, "Saanich votes to allow secondary suites in rural areas" (June 2024).
[8] Council minutes, June 24, 2024, Public Input and Secondary Suites Outside the Urban Containment Boundary, pp. 6 to 14.
[9] Council minutes, November 20, 2023, 938 Ambassador Avenue.
[10] Council meeting video transcript, November 1, 2021 (clip 578, approx. 385 s); Council minutes, November 1, 2021, 3979 Locarno Lane.
[11] Council minutes: February 3, 2020; July 4, 2022; November 20, 2023; June 9, 2025; June 23 and July 14, 2025; statements of staff as recorded.

- [12] Council minutes, May 12, 2025, Strategic Plan, Lobby Register.
- [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.