

Nine Years, Nine Voices, One Answer

What Saanich's mayor, councillors and Chief Administrative Officer said on the record when residents were in front of them. Drawn from 1,380 hours of council recordings, every quotation timestamped to the second. 24 September 2026.

Brent Reems, CAO

Told council in 2019 that ticket revenue was \$20,000 and "not going to make up hiring an additional staff person." In 2021 sold three officers on \$120,000 a year in tickets. Asked in 2018 about missing conduct standards for enforcement staff: "it hasn't been a problem." Told council in 2021 that a bylaw handing entry powers to a new class of officer made "no consequential changes." Told council in 2025 that an owner who was abroad and uninformed when his title was encumbered had been afforded "procedural fairness." Told a councillor in 2026 that a resident's appeal from a director's decision "is really to court." Council ordered his performance review in 2022. It never arrived.

Councillor Colin Plant

Asked for the comparator ratios that justified the expansion and was told tickets would not pay for it. Moved the 2018 policy that dropped the safeguards, after asking about them. Moved the bylaw that armed the officers, seconded the motion that waived its public hearing, moved its adoption. Asked what the District's liability would be if a notice were lifted, three times, and never what the enforcement department's liability is. Moved or seconded ten of twenty-one notices on title. Told a homeowner who never received notice of his hearing, "we have to rely on the systems we have in place." Said appeals to council were "probably a good" thing, then voted 9-0 against one. Named the missing appeal as a defect in 2026 and voted for the bylaw anyway. In the chair at open forum, stopped two residents' clocks inside a minute.

Councillor Nathalie Chambers

Seconding the first notice on title in the series: "I too once had a permit that had gone out of expiration, and I had to take down a very loved tree house." Her farm's website credits an environmental activist with no trade certification for restoring her barn; Saanich's Development Tracker shows no permit. Reported in writing to the bylaw department in February 2024. Nothing visible since. Told an owner asking to lift his notice that his letter was "very compelling," then seconded the refusal. Asked in 2025 whether an owner abroad should get more time, then voted 9-0 to refuse him.

Councillor Karen Harper, candidate for mayor

Put the Camrose owner's case better than he did: "you replace a couple of stairs, well you replace three, is it four, suddenly you need a permit?" Then let the refusal carry. Moved the endorsement of the enforcement model. Voted 9-0 in 2025.

Councillor Zac de Vries, candidate for mayor

On a notice on title, November 2023: "it would be negligent not to." Voted 9-0 in 2025.

Councillor Susan Brice

Asked the one resident-minded question of 3 February 2020, what removal would take once the work was approved, then "I'm supporting the staff recommendation." Seconded every reading and the adoption of Bylaw 9694. Seconded the notice on 938 Ambassador Avenue. Voted 9-0 in 2025.

Councillor Judy Brownoff

"We do have to protect the district." Moved three notices in one night, January 2022. Voted 9-0 in 2025.

Councillor Teale Phelps Bondaroff

Moved the notice on 938 Ambassador Avenue and the motion refusing to cancel it. Rose on a point of order to stop the owner's lawyer naming the complainant or the officers. Raised the point of order on which the chair silenced a resident fourteen seconds into open forum: "so much as we'd like to hear information from our resident, we cannot."

Councillor Mena Westhaver

Seconded the deferral of the 938 Ambassador cancellation request. Voted 9-0. Asked nothing at either hearing. Not seeking re-election.

Councillor Rebecca Mersereau, 2018 to 2022

The exception. Moved the September 2022 motion directing staff to report on evaluating the CAO, "a trigger so the task would not fall by the wayside." It fell by the wayside.

Mayor Fred Haynes, 2018 to 2022

To the Camrose owner after the vote: "I'm sorry, but your appeal is declined." Presided over the removal of the previous CAO without cause at \$579,769, said council had "cast their minds out 18 months" before acting, and appointed the director who had spent those eighteen months building the enforcement department. Same day.

Mayor Dean Murdock, 2022 to 2026

Presided over the night 938 Ambassador Avenue was encumbered with its owner abroad, and over both hearings that refused to lift it. On 23 June 2025, having just heard counsel argue that council had encumbered a man's title without telling him, turned to the next presenter: "in fact we're interested in what you're going to say." Same night, when the CAO supplied the wording of council's own motion to a councillor who could not find it: "I think we would take that as ventriloquism." The motion passed on the CAO's words. On 14 July, named the CAO to answer the fairness question, put the 9-0, asked nothing. Not seeking re-election.

The pattern. The resident is thanked, called compelling or respectful, sympathised with, and refused. The refusal is explained by liability, exposure, protecting the District, relying on the systems in place, or the absence of any mechanism to do otherwise. In no instance found was a staff recommendation on a notice rejected. In no instance found was staff asked about the enforcement department's own exposure. Twenty-one titles. Three owners asked. Three refused. One motion to review the man who built it, never answered.

Full reports with recording timestamps, minutes and documents available on request. Christopher Caddell, saanichbylawreform@gmail.com