

Talk given at Trust Zoom Town Hall Meeting, 21 Sept, 2021

My name is John Cowhig, and I've been a resident of Salt Spring Island for 17 years.

I'd like to share my experience over those years.

First is deep gratitude for living in the Gulf Islands. Like all of us, when I sit by a stream, or in the deep calm of a leafy forest, or watch the ferries go by, or see one of David Attenborough's wonderful documentaries, I get a clear sense of the wonderful idealism that you, the trustees and your staff and advisors, are coming from. How grand and precious nature is, and you are right, we must not despoil her.

The challenge, of course, is to protect nature in a way that integrates the rights and needs of residents. As you've heard from many of us over the years, and especially now with your new Updated Policy Statement, in your idealism you've more and more disregarded the residents and think only of the environment.

I don't think you appreciate how much you hurt people by making it so miserably complicated and expensive to get the simplest thing done. How would you feel if you applied to do something as elementary as a lot line adjustment, and because of all your regulations and bureaucracy, it took two or three years and cost \$50,000—\$100,000? Who has years of their time and tens of thousands of dollars to waste on something that could've been decided by a few intelligent people over a cup of coffee?

And I'm sorry to say this, but everyone knows your costs and complications are why there's a housing crisis here. Nothing ever gets done because of your restrictive bureaucracy.

We want to be positive, but please remember: legally you represent the residents of these islands. This is a democracy. The residents elected you. The residents pay for your salaries and staff. And not just legally you represent us—we shouldn't have to say that—Morally, your job is to represent the residents.

So, I'm asking you: please look into your hearts for what's legally and morally your duty. Don't just look through the filter of your ideology—your personal interpretation of how to preserve the environment. We all want to

preserve the environment, but we all live here too, and we want to preserve our rights as residents and property owners to enjoy our lucky life in the Gulf Islands—they belong to all of us. We don't want to be afraid of you, wondering, “My God what is the Trust going to do next? What rights will they take away next?”

You are good people. Everyone knows that—we can hear it in your voices and feel it in your sincerity. But please act as our representatives and don't just represent your view of the universe. If you do the right thing by the residents, instead of fearing you, everyone will appreciate you, support you, applaud you. And so will the environment. You can make the environment happy and the residents too.

Thank you.