

**From:** BRIAN MILNE, Salt Spring Island  
**Date:** March 5, 2022  
**Subject:** FORMAL LETTER OF COMPLAINT

**To:** sfast <[sfast@islandstrust.bc.ca](mailto:sfast@islandstrust.bc.ca)>, lbusheikin <[lbusheikin@islandstrust.bc.ca](mailto:lbusheikin@islandstrust.bc.ca)>, trockafella <[trockafella@islandstrust.bc.ca](mailto:trockafella@islandstrust.bc.ca)>, drogers <[drogers@islandstrust.bc.ca](mailto:drogers@islandstrust.bc.ca)>, pgrove <[pgrove@islandstrust.bc.ca](mailto:pgrove@islandstrust.bc.ca)>, lpatrick <[lpatrik@islandstrust.bc.ca](mailto:lpatrik@islandstrust.bc.ca)>, pluckham <[pluckham@islandstrust.bc.ca](mailto:pluckham@islandstrust.bc.ca)>, Russ Hotsenpiller <[rhotsenpiller@islandstrust.bc.ca](mailto:rhotsenpiller@islandstrust.bc.ca)>, tpeterson <[tpeterson@islandstrust.bc.ca](mailto:tpeterson@islandstrust.bc.ca)>

**Dear Ms. Busheikin and Islands Trust Finance Committee**

*Regrettably Ms. Busheikin's letter conveys a misunderstanding of property owner concerns.*

*The interpretation of the survey raises a serious concern about the committee's ability to credibly represent our interests.*

*The survey showed 49% wanted a decrease in the budget and 31% did not want an increase. Your interpretation is irresponsible.*

*You have not listened to the people that you were elected to represent.*

*Sincerely,  
Brian Milne  
Salt Spring island Resident*

On Mar 2, 2022, at 10:53 AM, Laura Busheikin <[lbusheikin@islandstrust.bc.ca](mailto:lbusheikin@islandstrust.bc.ca)> wrote:

Thanks for taking the time to communicate.

As you have included me as a recipient of this email, I will offer a response, speaking as one trustee who sits on the Financial Planning Committee (FPC).

I very much support your assertion that all residents of the Trust Area should have a voice in decision-making. For the Trust budget, this voice can be expressed mainly in the survey, letters and delegations to Trust Council, and conversations with local trustees.

My sense is that FPC and Trust Council members have been paying attention to public input. Perhaps you feel it is ignored because the proposed budget does not exactly match the results of public input. I can assure that for me personally, and I believe for other trustees, your input influenced our decisions. Respecting, listening to, and being influenced by input does not necessarily mean you do exactly what that input says.

Elected officials are meant to pay attention to *all* public input—surveys, emails, phone calls, letters, etc—and also to consider input from other sources (scientists, other agencies, First Nations, and staff, and to consider policy, history, and the future. So while we considered the input, and it influenced us, we did not vote in favour of a zero % increase in the budget. A survey is not a referendum.

FPC has been working at bringing this budget down for months. Numerous worthy projects have been removed from the initial rough draft. The version of the budget we recommended to Council had a much lower tax increase than the version we had considered at our previous meeting (2.3% vs 4.88%, not including non-market factors, which stayed the same).

Most of the budget increase over last year was due to our success in receiving grants, so does not impact taxes. This was all part of FPC's discussion and thinking. If you take the grant amount out of the total budget number (the grants can't be used for general expenses but rather are tied to specific projects), the increase is in fact less than inflation.

Also I'll note that the survey stated 49% of people did not want an increase in services and programs, not that they didn't want the budget to increase. 51% of survey respondents wanted services and programs kept the same or increased. This in fact would require an increase in budget, due to inflation and to mandatory increases in staff remuneration (as per union requirements and the Public Service Agency contract, and in order to retain staff, which saves money in the long run).

The budget includes a one-off expense for elections, as well as a \$75,000 line item that is specific to Salt Spring and funded only by Salt Spring residents. It only includes one new staff member, a part time fund development specialist, whose would be focused on building fundraising capacity. This position was extensively debated, and the decision to recommend it was made because it will in the long run provide more non-tax financing for the Islands Trust.

I'm not asking you to agree, but am explaining just a bit of the thinking and discussion that went into the Financial Planning Committee's decision to recommend this budget to Council. We also considered the duty of an elected government to be fiscally responsible, the impact of increased taxes on affordability and community well-being, and the value of the services and programs we provide. We too pay property taxes, as do our friends, family members, employers, clients, and neighbours. We do not take this lightly. In the end, a large majority of the committee felt satisfied with including what we believed to be a small tax increase.

Regards,  
Laura