



STAFF REPORT

TO: Council **MEETING DATE:** March 5, 2024
FROM: Planner II **FILE NO:** 3220-Courtney-711
SUBJECT: Zoning Amendment to allow drilling of a well for a domestic water supply at 711 Courtney Road

REPORT FOR DECISION

PURPOSE

The Town has received a zoning amendment application requesting permission to drill a well for a domestic water supply at 711 Courtney Road.

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with information pertaining to the application, including the applicant's rationale, the Town's regulations, and staff analysis.

BACKGROUND

Subject Property

The property is located on the easternmost Town boundary, as shown in Figure 1, accessed by Courtney Road in Electoral Area F of the Sunshine Coast Regional District. The property is approximately 15,700 m² or 3.89 acres and is heavily treed with a steep terrain, sloping towards Gibson Creek. The Town boundary follows the eastern property line.

Gibson Creek runs through the property, as shown on Figure 2, and the property is located within three Development Permits Areas:

- DPA 1 - Geotechnical hazards
- DPA 2 - Environmentally Sensitive Areas
- DPA 9 - Gibsons Aquifer

The property is zoned R2 and contains a single-family home and a storage shed.

The property is not serviced by the Town's water, sanitary or storm infrastructure. It has a private shallow well providing water, which has become increasingly inconsistent and now runs dry between May to November.

To supplement the well, there are multiple tanks on the property with a total capacity of 9000 gallons, however, this is not sufficient for household needs during prolonged dry periods. The household relies on water trucks to refill their water tanks during the summer drought.

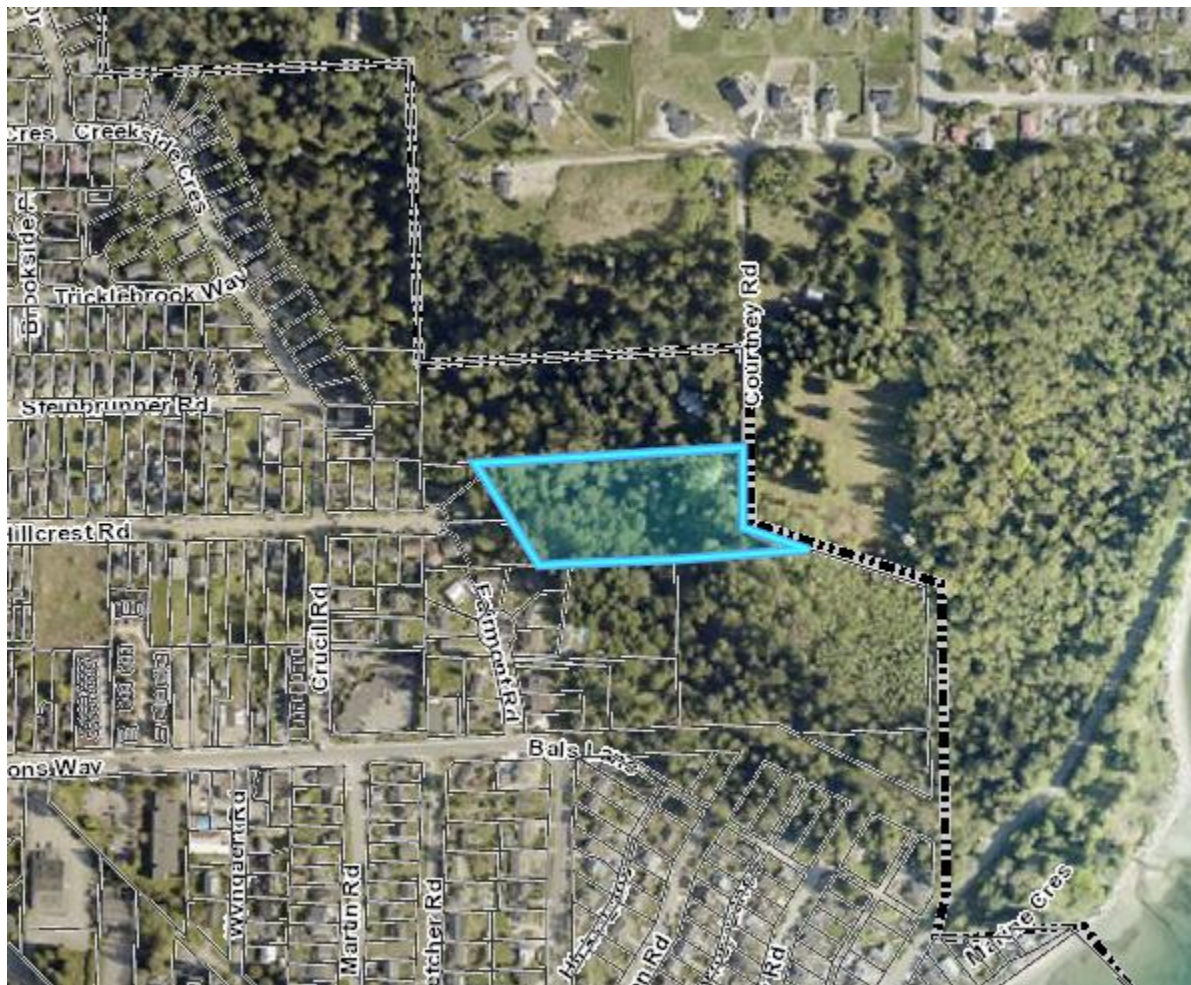


Figure 1: Location of Subject Property (Town boundary is delineated in the black and white line)

Municipal Boundary Reduction

The property is one of three properties in the process of applying for a Municipal Boundary Reduction. The properties, 711 Courtney Road, 733 Courtney Road and Lot 6 Courtney Road, are separated from the rest of the Town of Gibsons by Gibson Creek and the ravine.

The Gibsons Creek ravine renders the properties unserviceable from the Town water and sanitary sewer systems. Therefore, the properties have their own domestic wells for water supply and on-site septic system.

An adjustment of municipal boundaries involves coordination between Provincial, Regional, and Municipal governments. It is anticipated that the process could reasonably extend into 2025.

The key objective of 711 Courtney Road is to drill a new domestic water source as soon as possible. Due to the unpredictable timeline for the Municipal Boundary Reduction and subsequent permissions to drill a well in the SCRD, the owners have applied to rezone to permit the drilling of a well.

DISCUSSION

Section 3.07 of the Zoning Bylaw describes uses that are prohibited in all zones. Section 3.07 (3) states the following:

Any use of land for the drilling or operation of wells to extract water from subsurface soils is prohibited in all zones, except for wells operated by the Town as part of a public water supply.

The closest water main to the property is approximately 240 metres north of the property, as shown in Figure 2, and is a part of the SCRD’s Chapman Water System. The Town’s water distribution system does not provide service to the east side of Gibsons Creek. The cost to construct a new water main is approximately \$1000-2000 per metre, in the Town of Gibsons the cost is closer to \$2000 per metre when paving requirements are considered. and thus the cost to extend the main to the property could be upwards of \$500,000.



Figure 2: Location of the closest water main to 711 Courtney Road. 711 Courtney is outlined in blue

Because “drilling or operation of wells to extract water from subsurface soils” is a prohibited use in the zoning bylaw, a rezoning to allow the drilling of a well on the property is required.

In April 2013, Bylaw Amendment 1065-25 permitted the property at Lot 31 Chaster Road, to drill a well for domestic water supply with the following provisions:

(4) *Notwithstanding subsection (3) drilling of wells for domestic water supply is allowed subject to conditions on the following lot:*

- *Lot 31, Plan 4438 (PID: 011557737)*

Well drilling on the above-listed property is subject to the following conditions:

- (a) *compliance with the Town of Gibsons Bylaws and/or issuance of an appropriate Development Variance Permit;*
- (b) *specifications for the methodology for the drilling of the well and well head protection are to be provided by the Town and are to be constructed/installed at the property owner’s cost;*
- (c) *the installation of a data logger in the well for the purposes of monitoring the Gibsons Aquifer may be required at the Director of Engineering’s discretion;*
- (d) *a testable backflow prevention device is to be installed on the main well supply line and tested according to the requirements of the Town’s Water Service Connection Bylaw at the cost of the property owner; and,*
- (e) *a water meter is to be installed on the main well supply line at the cost of the property owner according to Town bylaws.*

The Zoning Amendment would include 711 Courtney Road in this site-specific condition, to allow the drilling of a well for a domestic water supply.

Official Community Plan

The OCP includes policies to protect the integrity of the aquifer but there is nothing specific on prohibiting the drilling of private wells. An excerpt of Section 6.5 of the OCP is enclosed as Attachment B. It is staff’s opinion that the application is consistent with the OCP and therefore this rezoning does not require a public hearing.

COMMUNICATION

This Zoning Amendment is consistent with the OCP and therefore will not require a Public Hearing. However, neighbours must be notified before first reading.

POLICY / PLAN IMPLICATIONS

Strategic Plan Implications

Council's mission includes delivering core services; protecting our aquifer and other natural assets; and balancing growth and ecological integrity. Goal #9 is to ensure aquifer and watershed protection to continue to deliver safe and sustainable water supply to the community.

Drilling a private well into Aquifer 560 allows the property more reliable access to a core service, however, it also creates a new point of diversion from the aquifer, which could lead to contamination. On the other hand, this would be an opportunity to monitor this section of Aquifer 560 as there is no Town well close by, and the Church Road well is 1km away.

Financial Plan Implications

As the property is not serviced by Town water, there will be no impact on either water parcel taxes or user fees as neither apply to the property.

If BC Assessment applies an increased assessed value because of the new well, the Town's residential tax base will increase as a result.

NEXT STEPS

If Council rezones the property to allow the drilling of a domestic well, the following Permits will be required prior to drilling on site:

- Development Permit 1 – Geotechnical hazards
- Development Permit 2 – Environmentally Sensitive areas
- Development Permit 9 – Gibsons Aquifer
- Drilling Permit

RECOMMENDATIONS / ALTERNATIVES

Three options are proposed below for Council's consideration. Staff recommends Option 1.

Option 1: Notify neighbours of first reading, then proceed with three readings.

The application is consistent with the OCP and therefore a public hearing is not required. Council is required to notify neighbours of the date of first reading, and therefore this option proceeds with the notification process.

As the property is within 800 m of a highway, Ministry Approval is required. Therefore once neighbours are notified, this bylaw can be given three readings in one meeting.

THAT staff be directed to notify neighbours of the date of first reading of Zoning Amendment Bylaw 1065-77, 2024.

Option 2: Request changes to draft Bylaw 1065-77

The option allows Council to request a change, or more information before proceeding to first reading.

THAT the following changes be made/information be provided prior to First Reading of Zoning Bylaw Amendment 1065-77, 2024...

Option 3: Deny the Zoning Amendment and close the file.

This option rejects the application.

THAT Zoning Amendment Bylaw 1065-77, 2024 be rejected.

Attachments

- Attachment A - Draft Bylaw 1065-77, 2024
- Attachment B - Section 6.5 of the OCP

Respectfully Submitted,

Katie Thomas
Planner II

Report reviewed by:

X	Chief Administrative Officer
	Director of Corporate Services
	Director of Finance
X	Director of Infrastructure Services
X	Director of Planning and Development