

Mill Bay election choices could hang on experience and Bamberton

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News Leader Pictorial

Passionate is the word to describe all three Mill Bay candidates running for a Cowichan Valley Regional District director's chair.

But for voters, the decision could come down to who's onside with their own views on several issues, not the least of which is where the candidates stand with respect to community growth and particularly Bamberton, the largest proposed community development in the valley.

Rookie candidate Ken Waldron has stated he believes the proposed 3,200-homes community is on shaky legs and won't have the community support it needs to get off the ground.

Fellow newbie Balu Tatachari threw his hat in the ring because of his opposition to Bamberton.

"I am of the strong belief the official community plan has to be respected and Bamberton is outside the OCP (urban containment boundary) and I'm yet to

get a clear understanding of what value it brings to the table," he told the *News Leader Pictorial* in an earlier interview.

The married dad of a young family has been vocal at all the public hearings on Bamberton and makes no bones about his opposition to the proposed development at the old cement site.

The one experienced candidate, Brian Harrison, has adopted a wait-and-see attitude — wait and see what his community wants.

"We've heard Bamberton's side of it and the regional board commissioned a study (results are due this month) to take a look to see what the impacts will be and we assume that report will have positives and negatives," he said in an earlier interview.

"My biggest concern is to reestablish the vision of what the community would like to see happen here with respect to development."

Waldron and Tatachari have little or no political experience, while Harrison is a former CVRD director and former chair of the board.

However, Tatachari said he believes his inexperience with local politics is exactly what Mill Bay-area residents need.

"I'm starting from a fresh page and that's an advantage because I'm a guy with new ideas, fresh thoughts and I do not belong to any establishment," said the man who, at an all candidates meeting last week, listed water management as one of his top concerns.

Meanwhile, marine engineer Waldron agrees a fresh perspective might work in his favour.

"I'm passionate and optimistic and I believe in the basic good of people and that we live in the greatest place on Earth and I'd believe as a CVRD director it'd be my responsibility to protect all that."

The second large issue facing the winner of the Mill Bay/Malahat area is one plaguing every area of the CVRD — how to come up with a regional recreation funding formula everyone can live with.

The issue has been in the background for some time, but was recently thrust forward when it was announced every area — except prime funders the City of Duncan and North Cowichan — will have to pay to use the new pool.

Computer application designer Tatachari said he's "willing to be a team player" and wants to contribute to an equitable solution to the problem.

Harrison, who's been embroiled in the controversy during his past terms, said a fair and equitable funding formula isn't in the cards because not all directors are valued equally.

In fact, Harrison seemed to echo the wishes of many in the southern most parts of the CVRD who believe the time is right to form a separate municipality.

"It seems unless the south end comes together with a united voice, they're not taken seriously by the other members of that board," the retired school administrator said.

Meanwhile, former navy man Waldron man said No. 1 on his hit list is to try and lure a community police station to Mill Bay.

Waldron also said he was a green candidate and wanted to preserve and enhance the area.

"I truly believe there is no reason the Cowichan Valley shouldn't be a world leisure and recreation destination," he said.