

Report

Date July 16, 2025
Subject 1884 Tzouhalem Road Sanitary Service

File:

PURPOSE

To consider a request to connect five single-family homes located at 1884 Tzouhalem Road, situated on Cowichan Tribes' Lands, to North Cowichan's sanitary collection system.

BACKGROUND

The sanitary main that runs along Tzouhalem Road is part of North Cowichan's South End sanitary collection system. This main terminates at the Joint Utility Board Sewage Treatment Plant (JUB STP). Tzouhalem Road marks the border between the Cowichan Tribes' lands and North Cowichan, with properties on both sides of the road connected to the collection main.

Cowichan Tribes has created five new lots at 1884 Tzouhalem Road (Figure 1). A single-family home will be built on each lot. Cowichan Tribes has requested that the five single-family homes be connected to North Cowichan's sanitary main along Tzouhalem Road.

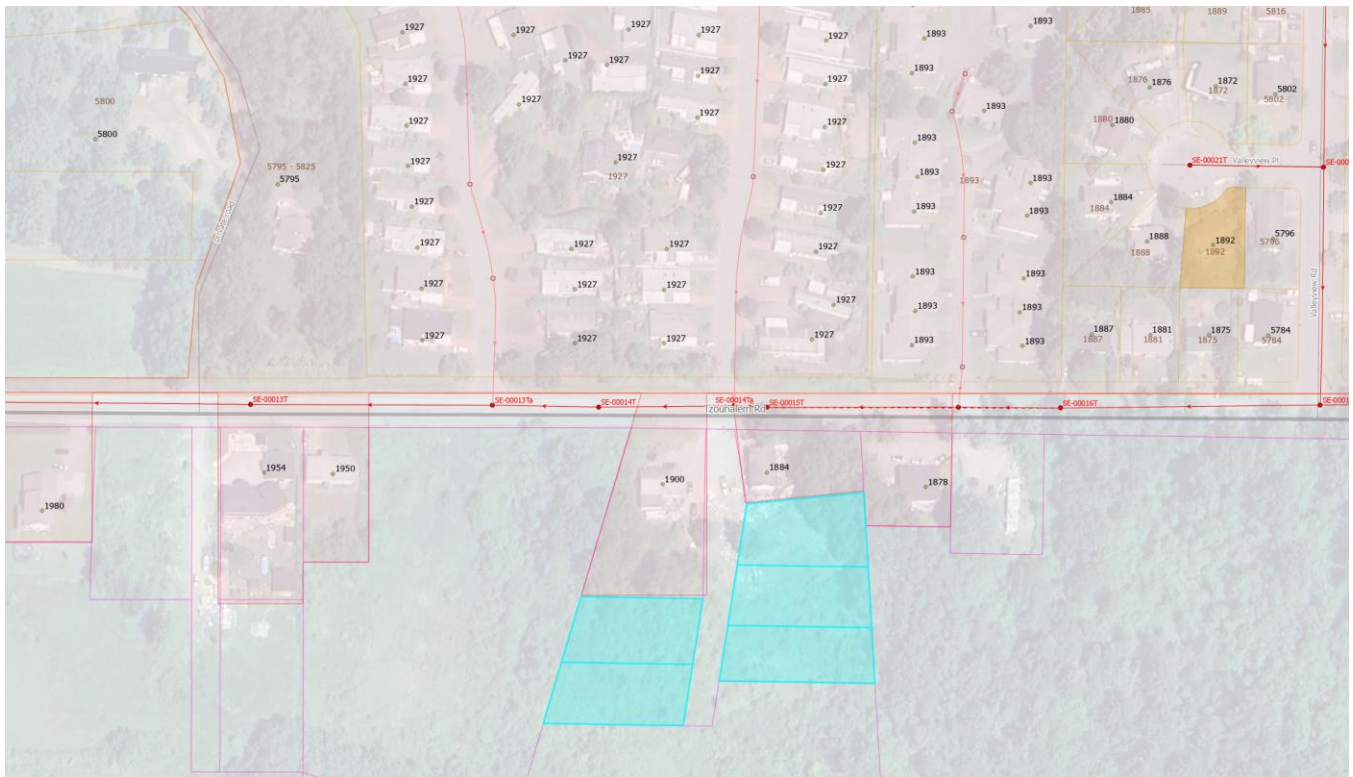


Figure 1 – Location plan and lot layout for five new lots that are the subject of this connection request.

DISCUSSION

Historically, homes located on Cowichan Tribes' lands have been permitted to connect to North Cowichan's sanitary main along Tzouhalem Road, thereby eliminating the need for them to construct septic fields. To date, the number of homes connected to the sanitary main has been relatively small and has been accommodated within the capacity of the collection system and the JUB STP. The collection system has sufficient capacity to accommodate the connection of these five Equivalent Residential Units (ERUs).

These homes are treated as if they are located within North Cowichan, and so use North Cowichan's JUB STP ERUs. They pay all the same fees and charges a municipal resident would pay. Cowichan Tribes cover the costs associated with service installation and operation. The fees and charges that will be collected include a service connection fee, equivalent to a capital cost contribution fee, a parcel tax fee, and a user tax fee.

These five parcels will use a total of 5.0 ERUs, which staff will debit from North Cowichan's JUB-owned ERU inventory. North Cowichan currently has 1,133 ERUs unallocated out of the 9,162 ERUs currently owned. Over the last five years, North Cowichan has added approximately 186 ERUs per year, leaving approximately six years of ERUs available, based on the average growth rate of the last five years.

However, two upgrades will increase the capacity of the JUB by 10,000 ERUs and 30,000 ERUs:

1) **JUB STP Cell 1 Aeration Upgrade Project (estimated cost: \$4.5M):**

This project is currently underway and is expected to be completed in the first quarter of 2026. The project will increase North Cowichan's ERU count as follows:

- a) ERUs owned 14,531 ERUs
- b) ERUs unallocated 6,502 ERUs
- c) Average rate of ERU growth 273 ERUs/yr (Licker Geospatial population projection)
- d) Year capacity reached 2049 (24 years)

2) **JUB STP Cell 2 Aeration Project (estimated cost: \$13.8M):**

This project would add a similar aeration system currently installed in Cell 1 to Cell 2. The project will increase North Cowichan's ERU count as follows:

- a) ERUs owned 30,637 ERUs
- b) ERUs unallocated 22,608 ERUs
- c) Average rate of ERU growth 207 ERUs/yr (Licker Geospatial population projection)
- d) Estimate years capacity 2134 (109 years)

The JUB STP lease ends in 2059. It is likely that by then, a new treatment plant will be constructed to replace the JUB STP, and the matter of ERU capacity will be addressed at that time. Given that there are relatively affordable upgrade options underway, and considering the future, there will be sufficient sewage treatment capacity at the JUB STP to meet the North Cowichan's needs.

OPTIONS

1. **(Recommended Option)** THAT Council authorizes the Director of Engineering to enter into a sanitary service agreement with Cowichan Tribes for the sanitary servicing of five lots, each containing one single-family home, at 1884 Tzouhalem Road.
 - The recommended option will allow the sanitary flow to be collected and treated at the JUB STP as opposed to an onsite solution. This option is consistent with past practice and demonstrates a recognition of Cowichan Tribes' housing challenges, promoting continued good relations between Cowichan Tribes and North Cowichan, and is consistent with Council's goal to foster reconciliation with First Nations.
2. THAT Council deny Cowichan Tribes' request for the sanitary servicing of five lots, each containing one single-family home, at 1884 Tzouhalem Road.
 - This option will force the prospective homeowners to find an alternative solution for the treatment of their sanitary flows. This option would also be a break from past collaborative approaches to sanitary servicing of Cowichan Tribes' lands along Tzouhalem Road.

IMPLICATIONS

Financial

The costs for the connection of each single-family home are as follows and will be payable by Cowichan Tribes:

- 1) Equivalent to South End Development Cost Charges (DCC) contribution: \$2,563 (one-time cost)
- 2) Equivalent to parcel tax: \$263 per year (annual cost)
- 3) Equivalent to user tax: \$201 per year (annual cost for the use of the service)

Additionally, a one-time connection charge to the sanitary main will be levied, based on the bylaw rate of \$3,400.

Environmental

The utilization of service lines, collection mains, and sanitary treatment plants is the preferred methodology for handling sanitary flows. While septic fields can be used to treat sewage, they are constrained by the availability of land, groundwater levels and soil permeability. They also have a finite lifespan when compared to the piped system.

Social

The management of sanitary flows is a primary duty of local governments. North Cowichan and Cowichan Tribes have a good working relationship regarding the management of sewage flows for numerous homes located on Cowichan Tribes' land along Tzouhalem Road. By authorizing this connection, North Cowichan continues to build on this relationship and ensures that sewage is treated to today's standards.

Communication

If approval is granted by Council, North Cowichan staff will engage Cowichan Tribes staff to finalize the sanitary servicing agreement and to determine the cost to Cowichan Tribes for the provision of infrastructure to the property line/reserve boundary. Cowichan Tribes will be responsible for dealing with the prospective homeowners and the consultant constructing the works on the reserve lands. North Cowichan Operations Department will carry out the connection of Cowichan Tribes' sanitary pipe to North Cowichan's sanitary main on Tzouhalem Road. The standard procedure will be utilized to inform users of Tzouhalem Road of the disruption on this travel route.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council authorizes the Director of Engineering to enter into a sanitary service agreement with Cowichan Tribes for the sanitary servicing of five lots, each containing one single-family home, at 1884 Tzouhalem Road.

Report prepared by:



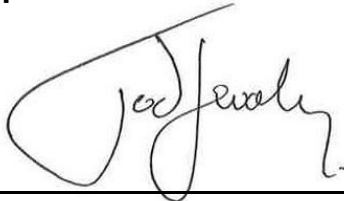
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