

"I'm not persuaded that the person, persons out there, unnamed, unnumbered, are going to feel that their CRD board experience has been particularly enhanced. I think they are quite capable of finding out how their government is working now." - Director Susan Brice, who voted against major webcast improvements

Grumpy Taxpayer\$ of Greater Victoria

'Almost' The Best Place on Earth | grumpytaxpayers.com | Mar. 2017



How does Sidney do it?

Tax rate increases held below inflation - again!

Idyllic Sidney-by-the-Sea is renowned for its hospitality, bookstores and summer night market, along with its eco-tourism attractions, manufacturing punch, retirement attractions and location as the gateway to the Gulf Islands.

It's also developing a reputation as a municipality that is able to consistently deliver quality municipal services with modest annual tax increases below inflation. **The average residence will see their taxes increase \$9 or 75 cents monthly this year,** perhaps the lowest tax increase in the province.

Town council has adopted its financial plan that will result in a tax increase of 0.66 per cent for 2017 with no changes to water, sewer and garbage rates but including an increase for reserves. (Of course this tax increase refers to the municipal-controlled portion of the tax bill only and not the other various taxes collected for other governments and entities. Sidney also collects taxes for example on behalf of the capital regional district and regional hospital).

The increase will also result in a modest impact on the business tax rate of 16.79481 (2016), which is considered moderate among its peers in the region.

"We continually stress, general measures of inflation are not top of mind as we consider our budgets; finding the right balance between service levels and cost are always the

primary consideration," Mayor Steve Price.

"General inflation is an arbitrary, artificial ceiling that fails to consider required and requested increases to service levels, including those approved through referendum. Inflation measures the cost of the same basket of goods from year to year. The demands placed on municipalities often require that we 'add to the basket'; that can't easily be accommodated within existing budgets, or under the inflation rate."

Staff in Sidney always look for internal efficiencies first, before bringing forward any proposal for a tax increase which has helped allow them to make it the eighth year in a row that there has not been a general inflationary increase to all areas of the budget.

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Taxes for the average residence assessed at \$514,360 are about \$1,387 per year, or about \$116 monthly. New construction and a growth in the tax base has increased revenue by \$150,000 to help reduce the amount needed by existing taxpayers to \$162,000.

It's worth reading the response from the director of corporate services for Sidney, Andrew Hicik, to a letter from the Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce about Sidney keeping the tax rate increase lower than inflation (see link below).

BACKGROUND:

Sustainable, Fair, and Transparent Property Taxes: Sidney response to the Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce

<http://www.peterwainwright.com/Chamber%20Response.pdf>

Town of Sidney Financial Plan 2017-21 and Budget Documents

http://www.sidney.ca/Services/Financial_Services/Budget.htm

[Greater Victoria Mill 2016 Mill Rates , Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce](#)

Desjardins considers dropping local roles

CRD Chairperson and Esquimalt Mayor Barb Desjardins is hoping to make the leap to provincial politics as the B.C. Liberal nominee in the riding of Esquimalt-Metchosin for the May 9 provincial election.

She has been mayor for nearly eight years, has just started her second one-year term as CRD chair and is the lead -co-chair of the Victoria-Esquimalt Police Commission.

CBC Radio reports that Desjardins will continue in her roles as mayor, CRD chair, and co-chair of the Victoria-Esquimalt Police Commission at least until the writ drops. Desjardins is compensated about \$42,000 in her role as CRD chairperson and about \$46,396 as mayor of Esquimalt plus any associated benefits.

Dreadful webcasts at CRD continue

CRD has turned down a recommendation to spend on \$55,100 on hardware and \$33,000 annually to upgrade webcasting so viewers see the faces of directors who are speaking. Instead an unspecified amount will be spent to make modest improvements to camera equipment.

Good luck following the dreadful webcasts of CRD meetings or figuring out who actually of the 24 directors is speaking and spending tens of millions of dollars on your behalf.

While community involvement and engagement is clearly stated as one of its corporate objectives, the CRD continues to lag many other jurisdictions. The City of Victoria is considered to have the model website for the region and check out Duncan and its excellent effort at www.duncan.ca

Grumpy Taxpayer\$ has a theme song >>



**Sidney Mayor
Steve Price**

MUNICIPAL MATTERS

The plan deals with every aspect of future development - land use, ecosystem preservation, transportation, economic potential, food security and measures to contain urban sprawl. - See more at:

<http://www.timescolonist.com/opinion/editorials/editorial-growth-strategy-splits-crd-1.10143589#sthash.pfccpo00.dpuf>

The **population of Metchosin has decreased from 4,803 to 4,708, according to Census 2016** figures released in February. As the

population remained under the 5,000 threshold Metchosin will continue to pay a nominal 'police tax' instead of a significantly higher rate....City of Victoria will hold a referendum this fall on whether or not to proceed with a **\$69.4-million replacement for the Crystal Pool and Fitness Centre**. The City has \$10-million in reserves to go toward the pool and needs to borrow it or find the rest from the region, provincial or federal government....Incredibly, after five years of wrangling **seven of the 13 municipalities on the CRD have rejected a regional growth strategy document**. This important plan deals with every aspect of future development, from land use, to transportation, economic potential and food security....

WHAT'S COMING UP

If you like what we are doing and want to contribute to our efforts, **a \$250 donation would sponsor our next annual general meeting and speaker this fall**. To make it easier for our supporters we've added a PayPal button at the bottom of this page that accepts all major credit cards. Thank you for your generous support. Also join us **Tuesday, Apr. 4 from 12 to 2 pm** for lunch and meeting at location TBA. Partners and interested supporters are welcome to sit in, RSVP to grumpytaxpayers@telus.net ...

Help us inspire better local government.

Sincerely,

The Grumpy Taxpayer\$ Team

