

Man Brings Charges Against Mayor

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By Rob Gowan

A Sauble Beach man has brought charges of obstruction of justice against South Bruce Peninsula Mayor John Close.

John Strachan is alleging that Close obstructed justice by instructing the bylaw enforcement officer to not enforce the town's dynamic beach bylaw against Joe Szewczyk, who owns a property on the beach.

"I asked the town to charge (Szewczyk) for driving on the beach and they told me that they have been instructed not to charge and that's what started this against Close," said Strachan.

Strachan said Tuesday the only reason he proceeded with the charge, which he brought before the courts himself, is that he wasn't taken seriously by town officials and he wants to make sure the laws are followed.

"Number 1, we do want to protect our beach," he said.

Strachan claims Szewczyk has been driving on the beach, which under the town's dynamic beach bylaw is prohibited. The bylaw prohibits certain actions on the beach including driving a motor vehicle, camping, consuming alcohol, cooking and setting fires.

Calls to Close on Monday and Tuesday were not returned by press time on Tuesday.

Just last week the town announced it had received two legal opinions that the bylaw did not apply to private property unless permission is received from the property owner. In a news release the town announced it would not be enforcing the bylaw on private property.

Szewczyk owns a property along with Sauble Beach Development Corporation from 5th to 6th streets and roughly 316 feet west of Lakeshore Blvd.

Szewczyk said last week that he was hopeful the decision by the town would put an end to what he called harassment and "ongoing interference with our family enjoyment and privacy."

The property has been the subject of protests over a locked gate that was built on the property. A group of neighbours from a nearby subdivision called Pine Grove Park claim an 80-plus-year-old covenant in their deeds grant them the authority to direct what may happen on the privately owned section of the beach, which is within the old subdivision boundary. A committee was formed and directives were established saying "it is not in the best interest of the lot owners in Pine Grove Park (Sauble Beach) and the beach welfare in general to allow any vehicular traffic on the beachfront" between 5th and 6th streets and bounded from Lakeshore Blvd. to the lake.

Szewczyk has said he only wants to be able to drive on his section of the beach and has no plans for the property, which is zoned environmental hazard which is very restrictive in the potential uses of the property.

Court staff said Close was served notice of the charge on Oct. 18. His first appearance in provincial court is scheduled for Nov. 15 at 9: 30 a. m. David Foulds, counsel for the Office of the Director of Crown Operations for West Region in London, said the case has been sent from the Owen Sound office to the regional office for assignment.