

# No plan for parking on beach, says owner

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by Scott Dunn

A Sauble Beach developer who with a company owns a section of Sauble Beach that was at the centre of a private obstruction of justice charge against Mayor John Close said people have to support South Bruce Peninsula's mayor or they'll lose him.

"I hope you do a good article on the mayor because he needs help. We don't want to lose him. The whole world is falling apart and we've got to support our politicians," Joe Szewczyk said in an interview Friday.

Szewczyk's comments came the day after a privately brought charge of obstructing justice against Close, the mayor of South Bruce Peninsula, was withdrawn by the Crown, which intervened in the case. A Crown attorney from the regional office determined there was no reasonable prospect of conviction.

Sauble Beach resident John Strachan brought the charge after alleging Szewczyk drove on the beach, contrary to the town's dynamic beach bylaw. Strachan said he was told by bylaw staff that Close had directed town employees not to enforce the bylaw on Szewczyk's property.

Strachan belongs to a group of cottage owners living in a subdivision, called Pine Grove Park. Strachan and others believe they have the right to direct what happens on Szewczyk's section of beach because lots in the old subdivision included covenants allowing the group to impose beach use restrictions in that area.

They protested by a gate Szewczyk erected in front of the beach last summer and continue to seek a way of enforcing what they view as their legal right to keep the beach open to the public and subject to the town's beach bylaw.

Strachan also took Szewczyk to court to try to get a judge to enforce the beach bylaw. But Strachan missed a court appearance by mistake and the charge was dismissed last November, with costs awarded to Szewczyk.

Strachan has appealed and the case will next be in the Ontario Court of Justice on April 9, said Grant Pattullo, Szewczyk's legal counsel in the original proceeding.

Asked what he plans to do with his beach property now that the applicability of town's beach bylaw seems clear and the case against the mayor was withdrawn, Szewczyk didn't answer directly.

"At no time in the past did I tell anyone what we were going to do. But you can see how it just kept going and going and going."

He said he never had plans to put a parking lot on his section of beach. When reminded of a 2005 meeting about the matter, Szewczyk said it was called by the town to canvass proposals for paid parking on the beach. He attended, among others, to express interest, he said.

A copy of a letter dated May 11, 2005, faxed to the town from Szewczyk Real Estate from Szewczyk, identified him as property manager, contains two options raised during a meeting. One was to "Set up and operate 'paid parking area' on the Beach between 5th and 6th Street North, in the same area as set-up by the Town in the past to generate income, but ceased operating due to

high water levels on the beach."

That proposal involved using the town's 6th St. N. washroom beach access point for parking, creating a berm to separate areas for cars and pedestrians and sharing 30% of all revenues with the town.

Failing permission to do that, the letter proposed operating beach parking between 5th and 6th streets, getting a town entrance permit and using a new access point to get to and from the parking area.

Szewczyk said paid parking on lands between 5th and 6th streets didn't proceed because of negativity toward the idea, from whom he didn't say. Asked if he was considering putting parking on the beach again, he replied "No, no, no."