

COMMUNITY ADVOCACY

When the Data Was Missing, I Went and Got It

Listening First. Acting on Evidence.

Community Advocacy · Evidence-Based Decision Making · Resident Engagement

In the spring of 2026, residents learned of a proposal to relocate the Port Severn Library into the Baxter Ward Community Centre.

The proposal was presented as being supported by survey results and community feedback. Yet many residents had never seen the survey, had never been asked to participate, and were unclear about what information Council would ultimately use when making its decision.

That raised a simple question:

If the decision was being guided by community input, where was the evidence?

Rather than simply taking a position for or against the proposal, I focused on gathering facts, understanding community priorities, and ensuring Council had access to meaningful resident input from the Oak Bay community before making a decision.

Gathering the Facts

I designed and conducted an independent community survey, published the methodology, asked residents directly for their views, and made the results available in full.

The objective was straightforward:

Give residents in Oak Bay a meaningful opportunity to participate and ensure Council had access to credible, verifiable community feedback.

OAK BAY RESIDENT SURVEY RESULTS

66

Residents Surveyed

85%

Year-Round Residents

56%

Opposed the Relocation

94%

Wanted Full Disclosure Before a Decision Was Made

The Findings Were Significant

- Not a single respondent had participated in the survey being referenced in support of the relocation.
- Nearly five residents opposed the move for every resident who supported it.
- An overwhelming majority believed Council should receive complete information before making a decision.

Residents consistently told me they wanted:

- Greater transparency
- More consultation
- Better access to information
- A clearer explanation of alternatives and impacts

Bringing the Evidence Forward

Collecting information is only the first step.

The next step is ensuring decision-makers have access to it.

I analyzed the survey results, compared them against the assumptions contained in Staff Report 2026-097, and presented the findings to Council through an in-person delegation with a formal written submission.

The goal was ensuring community perspectives and evidence were part of the decision-making process.

What the Experience Reinforced

This experience confirmed several beliefs that continue to guide me today:

- Residents deserve meaningful consultation.
- Decisions should be supported by evidence.
- Transparency matters.
- Community voices deserve to be heard.
- Good outcomes begin with good information.

One of the most important responsibilities of leadership is ensuring decision-makers have access to the best available information before important decisions are finalized.

Looking Ahead

Whether the issue is taxes, infrastructure, municipal services, emergency response, development, or community facilities, my approach remains the same:

- Listen.
- Do the homework.
- Understand the facts.
- Ask the right questions.
- Deliver practical results.

That approach guided my work on the Port Severn Library proposal, and it is the same approach I will bring to both the Township and District tables.

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