

The "hot mic" incident, which occurred during a recess at the **April 29, 2026**, Strathcona Regional District (SRD) Board meeting, involved a recorded conversation where two directors strategized to subvert the democratic process . This event is documented as a severe failure of professional governance that directly contradicts the foundational principles of the **Bylaw No. 513 Code of Conduct** .

Description of the Hot Mic Issue

During a brief recess called to cool tensions in a gallery packed with protesters, **Director Gerald Whalley (Area A)** and then-**Vice-Chair Mark Vonesch (Area B)** were caught on a live-streamed microphone discussing a plan to **intentionally break quorum**.

- **The Goal:** The directors sought to "scuttle" a controversial vote regarding the expansion of the **Strathcona Gardens** funding model to include Quadra Island 1.
- **The Tactic:** They were recorded calculating how many opposing directors would need to leave the room to ensure there were not enough members present to legally continue the meeting.
- **The Execution:** Shortly after the conversation, several rural directors were absent from the room. However, the attempt failed because enough directors remained present—both in person and virtually—to maintain a quorum and proceed with the vote .

Misalignment with the Code of Conduct

The Board subsequently determined that these actions violated the high ethical standards required of elected officials . The incident fails to align with the Code of Conduct in four specific areas:

1. Failure of Integrity (Section 3A)

The Code of Conduct requires directors to perform their duties with **honesty and high ethical standards**. Clandestine "backroom tactics" to collapse a public meeting are viewed as a breach of this trust. During his defense, Director Vonesch claimed he left to check on a colleague's digital connection, but the recording explicitly caught him calculating numbers to tank the quorum, an explanation peers labeled as "disingenuous".

2. Violation of Accountability (Section 3C)

The principle of accountability dictates that regional operations must be executed in an **open and transparent manner** so the public can understand the processes used to reach decisions. Using a walkout to prevent a vote from occurring "bypasses open public debate" and is characterized as a "total disregard for due process".

3. Breach of Leadership and Collaboration (Section 3D)

This principle mandates a **proactive, team-oriented approach** to governance . Specifically, the Code requires that once a vote has concluded, all directors must recognize and respect the **democratic majority**. Orchestrating a walkout to avoid a vote is the antithesis of collaboration; consequently, Director Vonesch was stripped of his Vice-Chairmanship for a demonstrated lack of the "judgment and discretion" required for leadership.

4. Failure of Respect and Professional Decorum

The Code forbids directors from engaging in **demeaning or intimidating behavior** 14. Mayor Kermit Dahl explicitly chastised the participants, noting that they billed the SRD for travel to attend the meeting only to walk out on their responsibilities 6, 15. He formally labeled the coordinated walkout an **"act of bullying"** 6, 16.

In summary, the hot mic incident remains a primary exhibit of **"targeted administrative friction"** and "hostage-taking politics" that the Board moved to end through the adoption of more rigid procedural rules like **Bylaw No. 609** 17, 18.