

A note on what the site plan does not show, and on a potential site visit

Re: RZ-2026-0014, 620 Laura Road (proposed cidery rezoning)
For: Parks, Environment and Climate Action Advisory Committee
From: Heather Miller
Date: 29 June 2026

This note records a gap in the application materials, and identifies a PECAAC site visit as the point at which the paper record and the ground could be brought together. It is set down for the record, bringing together what may be available to be observed on this site, and what the application as constituted does not contain.

What the form requires, and what the site plan omits

The Municipality's application form, at Section 8, requires the site plan to show, among other things, the location of any watercourses or Development Permit Areas, and any easements, covenants or statutory rights-of-way. On 620 Laura Road, Murray Creek runs through the property, and a Development Permit Area applies to it. The property also carries a registered wastewater system specific to the cidery: the applicants' own materials state that this "wastewater system is provincially licensed and registered under the Sewerage System Regulation, with approved design and maintenance schedules."

Neither Murray Creek nor the wastewater system appears on the site plan, in any version, through the temporary use permit process or in either version of the rezoning application. In presenting the application, the planner placed Murray Creek at the eastern edge of the site. As I understand its course, it runs close to the cidery and production area, through the body of the site rather than along its edge, between the heritage orchard on one side and the cidery and the newer orchard area on the other. The watercourse and the wastewater system that the form requires to be mapped, and that the applicants themselves confirm are present, are absent from the plan the public, the committees and Council are asked to rely on.

Assessment that was recommended, and then fell away

When the application first came to Council on 13 April 2026, it carried recommendations from Vancouver Coastal Health: that a professional hydrogeologist review concerns about additional water demand and the quality of water used on the property, and that a Registered Onsite Wastewater Practitioner confirm the intended use would not have a negative impact on the onsite wastewater system. The application was then revised, and the report that came to Council on 25 May 2026, with the framing around it, turned to process and timing: the applicants' wish for certainty, the growing season, a streamlined path to first reading and the proposed waiving of the public hearing. The water and wastewater recommendations are not carried forward. No hydrogeological or wastewater assessment of this use, on this site, has been carried out. The wastewater system is registered, which is not the same as its suitability for this use having been examined.

Why the character and timing of the wastewater matter

The wastewater from a cidery is not a small by-product. It can be several times the volume of the product made, and considerably more at peak, because pressing, fermentation and the cleaning of tanks and equipment generate the most of it. It is also seasonal: it peaks sharply in the autumn harvest and processing period. The same is true of the solid and process waste. A view of the operation taken outside that season may therefore not reflect it at its fullest. These are characteristics that warrant assessment by those with the mandate and the means to carry it out; the point here is only that the record shows no such assessment has been done.

A potential site visit: some considerations

This Committee conducts site visits as part of its work, and its recent consideration of the neighbouring Adams Road application shows how much a site visit can do. There, prompted by water and groundwater concerns, Council directed a site visit, and the visit engaged those questions directly: the existing creeks, the groundwater conditions, the recharge sensitivity of the ground. The site visit was the occasion on which the water on that property was actually looked at.

On 620 Laura Road, where the creek and the wastewater system appear on no plan and no water or wastewater assessment has been carried out, a site visit would be the first, and on the current record perhaps the only, occasion to see on the ground what the paper record has never shown. I do not set out what should be looked at; that is for the Committee. I note only that the ground holds what the plan omits, and that a number of things would be visible there that the record does not address: the course of Murray Creek through the site and the Development Permit Area along its lower extent; the location of the wastewater system and the path its discharge takes; and whether irrigation connections, ponds, diversion structures or any obstruction to the creek are present. Where a wastewater stream of this size and seasonality goes, on this site, is a question the record does not answer, and one the ground might begin to answer.

I set this down so that the record is complete: that the site visit was, on this application currently, the point at which these things could have been observed, and that the application materials did not contain them. What follows from that is of course for the Committee to decide.