

Council rejects Rogers tower deal

GIBSONS

DECEMBER 6, 2013

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Gibsons council rejected a proposal by Rogers Communications for a telecommunications tower at the Gibsons fire hall Tuesday night, but not without citing their disappointment with the community, which brought them to their decision.

Council voted four to one to reject with only Coun. Gerry Tretick voting in favour.

The decision came after months of community debate and an open house held Nov. 27 in which residents gave a firm thumbs down to the proposal.

Rogers had proposed to pick up the estimated \$120,000 cost for the new tower, while using it to upgrade the company's cell phone service. But now after council's decision, the Sunshine Coast Regional District (SCRD) will be tasked with budgeting for the cost of the tower, which works out to about \$6 per household for SCRD residents.

The SCRD and the Town say a new radio tower is needed to ensure good emergency communications.

Council cited the community opposition as the reason for rejecting the Rogers proposal, but made a point of saying many of the opponents' arguments spread fear in the community and that the scientific information used by opponents to strengthen their arguments was "misused."

"I also feel very disappointed in the community," said Coun. Lee Ann Johnson. "People are very frightened and have been stirred up by people within the community sending around a lot of information and, I think, causing dismay that's unfounded."

Coun. Dan Bouman said the response from the community was overwhelmingly negative and he didn't hear one positive comment, which compelled him to vote against the proposal.

"I feel compelled that the public will have come through, and I will vote against the tower, but this is an expensive decision," Bouman said. "I feel that science has really been misused here. The overwhelming weight of the science for this particular tower in this particular place says that it does not pose a risk to the public."

Tretick was blunt in his comments, saying in making his decision he looked at the facts over the scare tactics.

"I try to take into consideration facts rather than fears," said Tretick. "I'm not impressed by the people who go out and create fears among our residents based upon unqualified credentials and Internet research."