

OPEN LETTER TO GIBSONS RESIDENTS RE PROPOSED SHAW ROAD LONG TERM CARE FACILITY

The recent decision of your elected Council to sell Town land on Shaw Road to Trellis Senior Services for the development of a seniors care home has understandably generated some interest. Any meaningful discussion of this topic should be based on an understanding of the background facts.

The use of the property is restricted by a covenant registered by the Town and controlled by the Town. The covenant restricts the use of the land to public park, public playground, community center, public school, police station, library, community health facilities and not-for-profit housing for seniors. These same restrictions applied to the current Christenson Village property until 2005 when the then Mayor and Council arranged to have them released from the Town's control.

When one considers these uses the only reasonably foreseeable use of the land is for a community health facility such as is proposed. The other contemplated uses are unlikely to materialize for the following reasons:

1. Public park or playground the Town already exceeds the provincial average for parks and green space. As well the town has neither the staff nor the financial resources to develop and maintain the property as a park or playground.
2. Community center the Town is serviced by a relatively new community center.
3. Public school the Town has a new elementary school and the School Board has sufficient property of its own to meet its requirements.
4. Police station the Town has a relatively new police station.
5. Library the current library is well situated. It is unlikely any funds would be available from the Sunshine Coast Regional District function to build a new library.
6. Not-for-profit seniors housing The proposed care facility is in line with this covenant objective inasmuch as patient access is income-indexed and is controlled by Vancouver Coastal Health Authority.

The proposed care facility will provide significant direct financial benefits to the town including the sale proceeds of \$2.24 million, development cost charges of \$1 million, permit fees of \$130,000.00, and ongoing annual taxation of \$110,000.00. Indirect benefits will accrue to our businesses with the additional employment and services required by the facility.

We understand that there is a legitimate debate over private care or government care but that is for the policymakers in the provincial government and health authorities to determine. The proposed seniors care home will operate under contract with Vancouver Coastal Health much the same as the adjacent Good Samaritan Society care home. Opposition to the Council's decision if based on a philosophical opposition to privately contracted care facilities is understandable but ought not to be based on presumptions as to the purpose of the covenants or the arrangements that were made between the Town and the former property owners.

This property has been vacant and unproductive since the Town acquired it almost 25 years ago and is unlikely to be required for any of the other contemplated uses for many years to come. I do believe that if Mr. Christenson were asked today to choose between leaving this property barren indefinitely or acting now to provide hospice beds and much needed quality long term care beds for his fellow senior citizens that he would not disapprove of this Council's decision.

Wayne Rowe
Mayor