Land open houses meet requirement

Yrainucps Development Corporation withdraws from PRSC property process

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Open houses put on by PRSC Limited Partnership will be considered public consultation to exclude land from the province’s agricultural land reserve (ALR) if the company decides to make another application.

PRSC is hosting two open houses, one on Thursday, November 7 at the Powell River Recreation Complex and another on Wednesday, November 14 at the Tla’amin Health Centre in Tla’amin (Shamam).

City of Powell River councillors passed a motion at a special council meeting on Wednesday, October 31 that stated the city will participate in the public information meetings “to initiate discussion with the public to consider the exclusion of PRSC and Catalyst lands from the agricultural land reserve.”

The city had applied in 2006 to remove five parcels, or 345 hectares (847 acres), from the ALR to allow development and expand economic opportunities within the community. Four of the parcels are owned by PRSC, in which the city, Tla’amin band members, must be involved in the planning process.

At the special council meeting, Councillor Bob Astrove said he hoped “we are sitting in the background and are not part of the major discussions. I hope PRSC carries the ball completely on this and not us.”

Westby said that was the intent of the meetings. “The purpose of the city being there is to listen, observe, consult, hear what the thoughts of the public are on the matter and to consider, whether there will be a forthcoming request for the exclusion of these lands from the ALR at a future date.”

Denise Reinhardt, a spokesperson for ALERT (Agricultural Land Emergency Response Team), said a plan for sustainable uses of the agricultural lands should be guided first and foremost by the wisdom and experience of the Powell River agricultural community. “ALERT would welcome any open and inclusive public process that furthers the goals of real community planning,” she said. “However, open public dialogue must not take for granted that the Wildwood lands should be removed from the ALR, and ALERT would not support any process with that premise.”

Sustainable use of agricultural property response team’s goal

Exclusion
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First Nation and Catalyst Paper Corporation are partners. Catalyst owns the fifth parcel.

The Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) turned down the request. In a decision released on September 24, 2007, the commission found that many areas of the land under application have agricultural capability and are suitable for agricultural production; that the case for community need has not been established and the proposed solution was lacking in detail; and there was a lack of offsetting benefits to the ALR and agriculture.

Yrainucps Development Corporation had a development proposal for land in the Wildwood area, which included an airport, residential homes, a golf course and an equestrian center.

Stan Westby, the city’s chief administrative officer, said at the special council meeting that Yrainucps is no longer involved with the lands. He said Yrainucps had rescinded its offer and has had its deposit returned.

Walter Paul, Tla’amin chief and chairman of PRSC, told the Peak in a phone interview that PRSC has no proposals for the land.

“We’re moving ahead with the public consultation process, which, I guess, we should have done in the first place,” Paul said. “If people have questions, we’ll be more than happy to answer them on Thursday.”

Westby also said at the special council meeting that PRSC may be contemplating applying to exclude just the northern block of land in Wildwood. Westby also said he believes if PRSC wants the land to be excluded, it will request the city to apply for the exclusion.

“It has been confirmed with Erik Karlson, the chairman of the Agricultural Land Commission, that these meetings will suffice for public consultation for the purpose of excluding these lands should the request be forwarded,” Westby said.

Mayor Stewart Alsgard, Westby, Dave Formosa, PRSC director, and Brian Baarda, Catalyst vice-president and Powell River division manager, travelled to Burnaby to meet with Karlson and ALC staff on October 16.

A follow-up letter dated October 23 from the ALC stated, in part, that Karlson stressed at the meeting that “first there must be a transparent, community-based, comprehensive planning process supported by realistic population and employment projections and carried out with full public involvement.”

Second, the letter continued, a new ALR application must be submitted “in which local land-suited to farming is recognized and protected, especially where it is already in farm production.”

Third, any other directly affected agencies, such as the ministry of transportation and the Powell River Regional District board and