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PLANNER

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GL R2 2014.1/WB



To: Galliano Island Local Trust Committee, Trustees Pottle, Harris, and Bushlekin,

Re: Proposed Crystal Mountain Society retreat development – July 2, 2016

On Sunday, June 26, a group of North End neighbours came together on short notice to discuss our concerns about the Crystal Mountain Society's proposed development at the end of Devina Drive. More than a dozen people came from across the North End from Spotlight Cove, along Porlier Pass Road, Cook Road and Devina Drive.

Although some individuals already have expressed various concerns at meetings and in letters to trustees, we are disappointed to learn that planners are presenting draft by-laws for trustees at their July 4 meeting before those issues have been addressed.

This letter aims to present the diverse feelings and comments made at the meeting in the face of what we perceive to be a lack of available information. Several people wondered how this proposal has moved this far down the road without trustees and senior staff consulting substantively with the neighbours.

Proposed development is too large

For example, many of us are concerned that this proposed "forest retreat" is too large, with too many structures planned for an area currently zoned only for forestry. Various people expressed concerns about the impact on neighbourhood water supplies and water quality, others about increased traffic on what are now safe, quiet country roads. Still others expressed concern the proposal does not provide community benefits in return for increased density consistent with Local Trust Committee practice and our Official Community Plan. There was also a strong concern that the proposal causes undue fragmentation of the forest, again contrary to OCP and land use policies.

Water quality and supply

The Thorsteinsson family, longtime Spotlight Cove residents, hold the water license for Spotlight Creek, which runs through the proposed Crystal Mountain development. The family has enjoyed fresh, clear water for decades, for irrigation and apple orchards. They are very concerned that Crystal Mountain clients, who will come from all over the world, will not respect their water rights or understand how valuable water is on this island. Water use for a retreat by dozens of people, which would include 30 "huts", a bathhouse, laundry, dining hall and meeting place, will no doubt be sustained and heavy. Some of us wonder how CMS has addressed this problem.

Sewage and septic

Similarly, many of us are concerned about how Crystal Mountain's septic effluent, outhouse deposits or grey water will be handled other than by discharge into marshy areas, thus negatively impacting the neighbours below. Without adequately detailed information about sewage treatment plans there are concerns about how a non-conventional sewage treatment system would work in a growing wetland area with fluctuating water levels just north of the building area. It's not clear what discharges

might find their way into the groundwater, the riparian area to the south and neighbouring properties and beaches downstream from the development.

Although the draft by-laws and planners' reports don't appear to address the sewage treatment system, we've heard there are plans for a "constructed wetland". However, we understand that many engineers question the effectiveness of wetlands septic systems. We wonder who will monitor fresh water or aquifer use, the impacts on groundwater and the resulting pollution from what will essentially be a small village, in the midst of the scarcely-populated north end of Galiano, where we have chosen to live because we enjoy peace and seclusion. At its present scale and density, this proposed development, could potentially harm this key aspect of our way of life.

Increased traffic, threat to peaceful enjoyment

Several of us raised serious concerns about the effect of steadily increasing car traffic along Portier Pass Road and Devina Drive. Neil Friedenberg said he currently can allow his grandchildren to play and ride bikes along Devina Drive without fear for their safety. Other children cover the road with bright chalk drawings in summer: that's how quiet this road is. In an earlier report, the planners suggested a parking lot for up to 70 cars would be necessary at the end of Devina. That was a shocking recommendation for a secluded country road, which travels along a wetland providing a bird sanctuary. As [REDACTED] Adrienne Gregory put it, the area is a "sacred space, where owls call to each other across the valley at night. Crystal Mountain people may be retreating for their own benefit, but they'll ruin our peace." Unfortunately the draft by-laws appear to gloss over the parking issue altogether.

Fluctuating water table

Since maps of the area were done in 2014, the incursion by beavers has intensified to the point that the access road to Cook Road at the end of Devina is now under water in the wet months. Some neighbours report heavy and intrusive CMS use of their easement road, and the bulldozing of a neighbour's drainage system during the construction [REDACTED] on a neighbouring residential lot, which has been used for retreat purposes as well. In its latest retreat plan, CMS proposes to situate its village of huts, bathhouse, laundry, dining hall and meeting place between an area of hugely-increased wetlands and a beautiful cliff with intact old-growth cedars, arbutus and fir.

Non-compliance with Islands Trust and Official Community Plan policies

1. Lack of community benefit

Several North End neighbours are puzzled that the Local Trust Committee is not requiring Crystal Mountain to follow the longstanding Local Trust Committee policy that allows no rezoning to increased density beyond one residence in 50 acres in the forest zone, without community benefit. CMS proposes to place a covenant on part of the land but they have refused to follow the well-established practice of exchanging land for increased density, and to transfer title of land to be preserved to organizations with a specific mandate for environmental conservation or sustainable forestry. Nor are they proposing to provide land for affordable housing.

Some neighbours referred to studies showing that covenants to protect land frequently don't survive more than one change in ownership. Zoning follows the land, not the person; a future owner of the Crystal Mountain lands could use lands once under covenant to change the quiet character of North Galiano forever.

2. Fragmentation of the forest

Other neighbours pointed out the proposed preservation covenant would be on land to be cut up into three separate pieces by the two planned development zones with their huts, meeting-places, kitchens and outhouses. This would violate OCP and land use policies against fragmentation of the forest. A couple of neighbours pointed out the OCP is already a compromise between community needs and private interests and should not be undermined in ways that could set bad precedents for the future.

Lack of consultation requires slow down

Because of these concerns, we are asking the Local Trust Committee to slow down or suspend work on the Crystal Mountain development until it has fully addressed all neighbours' concerns about the size of the development, the changing water table of the site, water quality, lack of community benefit, growing levels of traffic and noise, and above all, achieving respectful and honest relationships with immediate neighbours.

Sincerely,

